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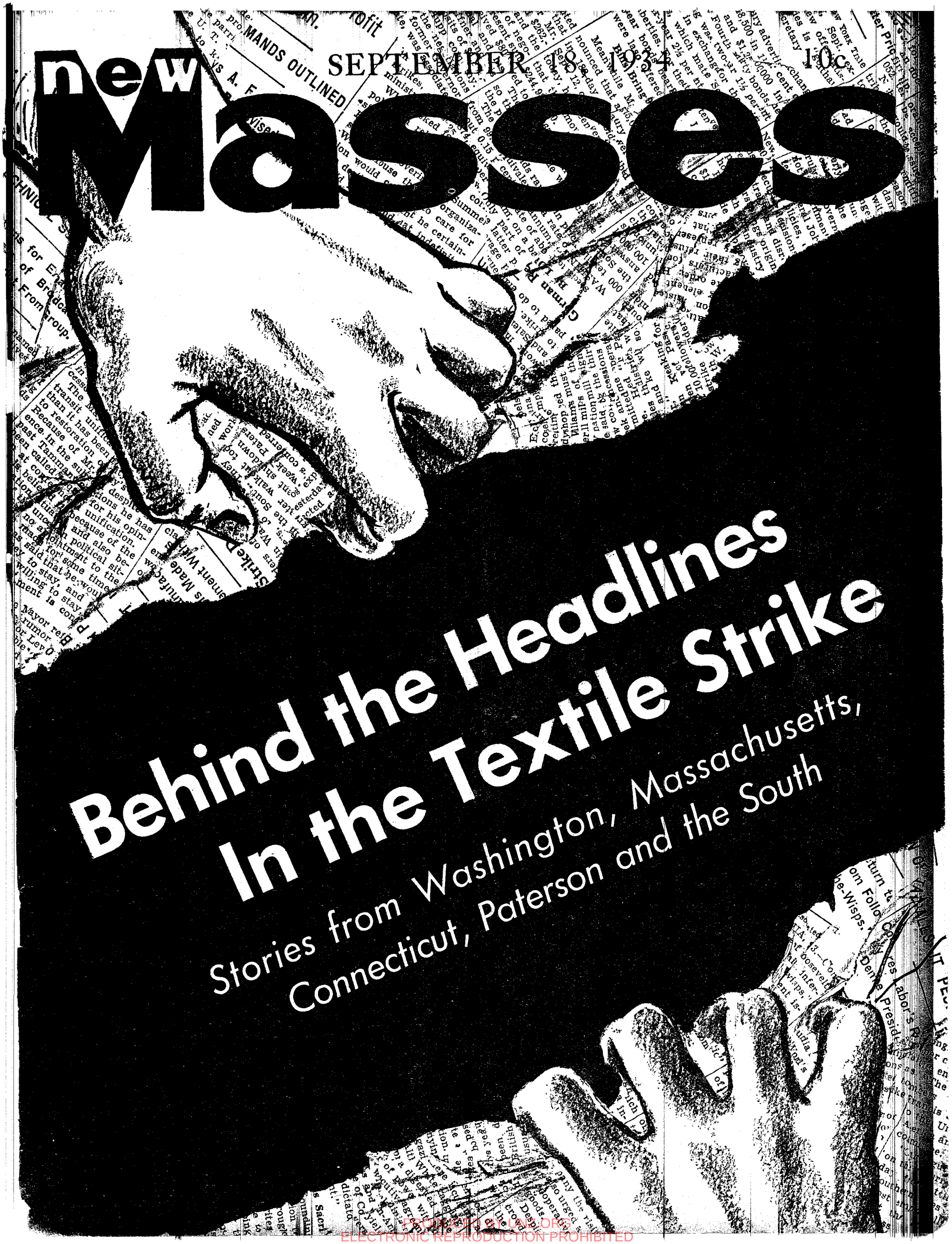
# New Masses



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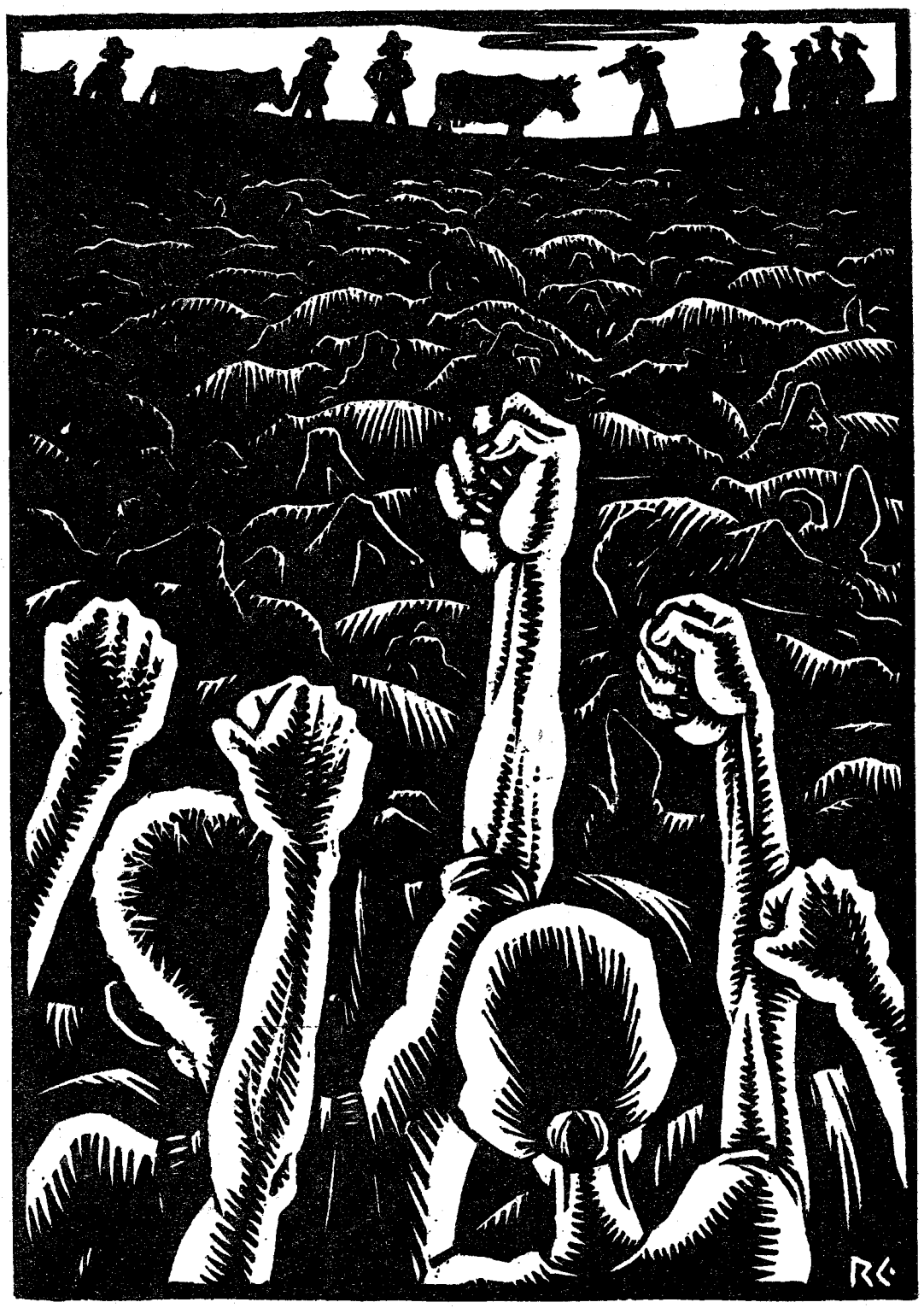
New Masses

SEPTEMBER 18, 1934



*Richard Correll*

ON a strike front extending over 1,800 miles, more than half a million textile workers entered their second week of battle for unionism and bread. A quarter million are striking in Dixie; 200,000 in New England; another 50,000 in Pennsylvania and neighboring areas. The governors in the sixteen states where mills are struck have functioned loyally for the class they represent: they are mobilizing all their armed forces for strikebreaking duty. The governors of the Carolinas were in the van. Their National Guardsmen were rushed off to the mill towns with orders to "Shoot to kill." And they did kill. Ten strikers are already known to have fallen—most of them shot in the back. But the flying squadrons continue from mill to mill persuading their fellow workers to come out. It is life or death with them. Manville Jenckes mill of Gastonia fame is out; in fact, all of Gaston County learned well its lessons of the 1929 strike led by the left-wing National Textile Workers' Union. Every one of its 105 mills is out. Bibb Manufacturing is out. Utica Knitting is out. The Paragon in Rhode Island is out. The giant mills of New Bedford are tied up 100 percent. More than three-fourths of the employed workers have left their looms and spindles. Hundreds of fresh recruits—the erstwhile "loyal workers," as the entire bourgeois press calls them—abandon daily the weave-rooms for the picket lines. Most valiant fighters come from the "cheap and contented" labor of the South. They literally storm the mill-gates despite the $10-a-day mercenaries—the gun-thugs, as the Southern workers call them—who bivouac the factory entrances. Never before have so many American workers fought so bitterly, so bravely against terrific odds. Capitalist democracy has inured them to gas bombs, machine-guns, bayonets. Today they face the greatest of all odds—the latest inventions of a monopoly capitalism monopolizing all avenues of expression: the radio, the press, the pulpit, the movies, the political machine. Yes, and the ingenuities of the N.R.A. lieutenants, and their own misleaders, the Gormans, the MacMahons, the Greens, with their perpetual siren song "Have faith in the President." And the President emerges from the Summer White House at Hyde Park, with a swanky Mediation Board, the employers' highest-powered weapon of all.

AND whom has the President chosen to compose his "impartial" Board of Mediation? The first disinterested gentleman, representative of that mythical entity, the perennial "innocent bystander" the Public—is John W. Winant, millionaire Governor of New Hampshire, one of the textile states. If Mr. Winant himself does not personally own textile stock it is certain that the banks wherein he deposits his wealth number large textile holdings among their assets. So of course the Governor can have no personal bias either against the strikers or for the owners. Governor Winant, that rarest bird of all, a "liberal Republican," lists himself in *Who's Who* as "engaged in the general investment business." Marion Smith, of Atlanta, Georgia, another member, is an attorney and chairman of the N.R.A. Regional Labor Board for the Southern area: a most surprisingly inept choice of our canny President, as this Southern Regional Board, because of its many anti-labor rulings (particularly that against the Alabama miners) has made a black record in sunny Dixie. Mr.

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Marion Smith, according to *Who's Who* is general counsel and director of the Fulton National Bank, the Piedmont Hotel Company, and the Southern Grocery Stores, Inc. The third and last member of the Board, Raymond V. Ingersoll, qualifies as a broad-minded public-spirited citizen, fit representative of the omnipotent public by the fact that he is President of the Borough of Brooklyn. A powerful figure in Tammany politics for many years, he served as chairman of Al Smith's 1924 campaign. This fact indubitably recommends him in the President's eyes. For who is so above the battle, so eminently fair to all concerned, as a Tammanyite?

THIS is the board that Francis Gorman, U. T. W. leader, along with President MacMahon and Bill Green, recommends to the striking textile workers to settle their strike. Gorman radios across the country "We have met the board. It is composed of *high-minded men.*" Gorman has even requested the President to confer upon this Board of Mediation the powers of arbitration—which would mean a compulsory end to the strike on whatever terms this high-minded group of three—a millionaire Governor, a Tammany boss, and a corporation lawyer—see fit. The terms which Gorman proposes as a basis for settlement are no less unsatisfactory. While the first and second demands (for recognition of the union and reduction of the work-week to thiry hours) remain intact, the two demands relating to wages and speedup, central problems of the strikers, are trickily modified. Gorman, the $15,000-a-year man, says, "We demand that there be no reduction in the weekly wage so that our pay shall be the same for 30 hours that it has been for 40 hours. When we know that the average wage today is less than $10 a week that demand seems *moderate* indeed. Under this heading there must be protection for wages in the higher brackets." This, when the wage demands agreed upon by the strike convention emphatically specified "unskilled —$13 a week (for the 30-hour week); semi-skilled, $18; skilled, $22.50; highly skilled, $30."

THE workers' response to Gorman's manipulations can be gauged from the words of the local strike leader at the graveside of the six workers mowed down in front of the Chiquola mills at Honea Path, S. C. "We'll settle the strike after we have spread it to more mills and when the employers are ready to grant the demands that these six union brothers of ours died for." When a reporter asked his opinion of the government arbitration board he added, "We'll arbitrate the thing ourselves." This is rank Communism! This is what the Reds have been continually calling for! The Red Scare was invoked to counteract precisely such rank and file heresy. The Communists continue to work tirelessly on behalf of the strikers. Their demands are the demands of the rank and file: spread the strike, greater mass picketing, elect strike committees from among the workers. These latter will be the basis for the formation of city-wide and county committees, that shall, in turn, choose representatives to a regional and ultimately, a national rank and file committee which could really lead the strike to victory. This is what the Communists mean by working-class democracy. This is Red Sabotage! This is treason! The formation of relief committees, aid to the strikers in their fight for civil liberties is the order of the day. Their fight for life is the struggle of all honest people—of all those from the middle-class who understand their fate is inextricably interwoven with that of the proletariat. United States Steel announced recently a 10 percent wage-cut for the white collar employes. If the living standards of close to a million textile operatives are lowered, the general standard of all who work for a living, whether in office, classroom or foundry will be slashed. We're all in the army now—the army of the dispossessed.

ON the same day last week, two profoundly moving funerals took place at opposite ends of the United States. In them the bereaved masses expressed their grief at the loss of great fighters for their class. At Honea Path, little South Carolina village, 10,000 textile strikers followed the plain board coffins which carried six of their comrades, slain while unarmed, by the rifles of hastily sworn deputies, in the interests of mill owners. The other funeral, in San Francisco, was that of a woman of 85, Mary Mooney, mother of Tom Mooney. For seventeen years Mother Mooney had fought with indomitable courage to free her son from the prison cell, to which he was condemned solely because he was a champion of workers' rights. Those who knew Mother Mooney never saw her give way for an instant to discouragement. As hope after hope failed she fought on. In the end, she lost all her illusions regarding capitalist "justice" and the effectiveness of "liberal" intervention. She placed her confidence, as Tom Mooney himself did, in the mass defense of the working-class. In 1932, at 83, she traveled half around the world to appeal to the workers of the Soviet Union, who had originated, in 1917, the first mass movement for Mooney's release. Thousands of revolutionary workers followed her remains to Civic Center in San Francisco. Thousands of battle-scarred veterans of recent class struggles in California paid their tribute to this heroic woman. When the body was borne across the ferry to San Quentin the California rulers took their last revenge. They refused to let Tom Mooney look upon his valiant mother in death.

THE Second U. S. Congress Against War and Fascism will take place in Chicago, on Sept. 28, 29, and 30. The First Congress, held last year, succeeded as never before in bringing into the national consciousness the vast scope of the open and secret war preparations being undertaken by all capitalist governments, and exposing the innumerable movements, in the United States, for the formation of extra-legal Fascist bodies. The task of the present Congress is to intensify this sense of the constant danger of war, to continue the exposure of war preparations and Fascist measures; but above all to organize more disciplined, more alert and better equipped national and local forces for a relentless struggle against war and Fascism. Victories of united front actions are being reported daily in the preparations for the Congress. Organizations of widely separate aims—such as churches, trade unions, women's clubs, Negro societies, and youth organizations of all kinds—have elected delegates to the Congress. As we go to press preparatory District Conferences are being held in Houston, Detroit, Cleveland, and many other cities. On Thursday in Christ Church House, New York, the Building Committee for the Congress held a mass rally, attended by New York delegates. Last week nine Negro organizations in Detroit elected delegates to the District Conference called by the Detroit Youth Committee Against War and Fascism. On this issue all strata of the middle-class can unite with the working-class, which is carrying on continually, in the streets and factories, bloody battles against suppression and militarization

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of the masses. The Second Congress Against War and Fascism must be made a shattering blow at the war mongers, madmen and Fascist murderers here and abroad.

LAST week we announced the refusal of the Socialist Party Executive to accept immediately the united front proposals of the Communist Party. But the proletarian masses are not waiting on the decisions of those who indulge in dangerous parliamentary delay. In other lands, and here in the United States the movement toward unity of action grows in ratio to the movement of the ruling-classes toward war, toward Fascism. In France the Communist and Socialist parties are carrying out decisive actions together. In the Saar Basin, where Nazis are working day and night, by bribery, coercion and military preparation, to dictate the result of the Saar plebiscite, united front demonstration of Socialists and Communists have been held. Saar unity is supported by the ever increasing solidarity of the underground Socialists and Communists in Germany. In Spain, Mundo Obrero daily publishes resolutions from the Socialist and trade union locals expressing agreement with the Communist program. Italian Communists and Socialists have issued, from underground, joint appeals to Italian workers and soldiers to fight off war and Fascism. In Austria, the united front of the Revolutionary Socialists, the Communists and the Joint Action Committee of the Schutzbund—former Socialist armed guard, now disbanded but existing illegally—has achieved important actions against war and the Schuschnigg regime. Similarly in America we have commented on the overwhelming defeat of Fascist elements in the historic Youth Congress held in New York last month. Joint demonstrations of the left-wing fur workers' Industrial Union and the International Fur Workers' Union take place in New York City against the A. F. of L. leadership. In Philadelphia the Young Peoples' Socialist League voted united front with the Young Communist League. In New Orleans the Socialist local and the League for Industrial Democracy issued a call to support the Second U. S. Congress Against War and Fascism to be held in Chicago late this month. Workers themselves, sweeping aside reactionary leaders, are declaring that the united front *must be* the order of the day.

RUBY and emerald colored dreams cherished by the American drug clerks of some day being the boss of a neat drugstore situated between the neons of the movie palazzo and the porcelains of the flash cafeteria, have faded into the land of conscious illusions for the great majority. The drug clerk today knows he is a worker and will remain a worker. But the drug clerks had to go through and come out of still another delusion. This was the attempt of the A. F. of L. to organize them by starting a racket which only lined the pockets of the organizers. The A. F. of L. adventure among the drug clerks has been thoroughly exposed; and an independent union, under consciously, militant leadership with a program of action, now totals 1,600 members. The Pharmacists' Union of Greater New York has conducted five successful strikes in various parts of the city, and owners are faced with the necessity of signing up with the union and hiring only union clerks. The Pharmaceutical Conference (an organization of drug-store owners) attempted to break the union by establishing a "Drug Clerk's Auxiliary" (read: company union). They tried to open the way for wage cuts by the N.R.A. technique of fixing a minimum of $20 for 60 hours work. The Pharmacists' Union fought back with efficient picket lines, open air meetings and leaflets; they have now set up demands for a $35 minimum for a 54-hour week, union recognition, abolition of the split shifts and a vacation for clerks employed one year or more. If the bosses refuse to comply they will face a general strike that may tie up thousands of stores in New York City.

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# The Week's Papers

WEDNESDAY, Sept. 5—Two killed, 24 injured in general textile strike; Roosevelt appoints "impartial" arbitration board.... Mary Montagna, 13, Hazlet, N. J., shoots herself, probably mortally, when parents' poverty forces her to withdraw from school. . . . Aluminum Company of America strike is ended after month by "compromise" agreement.... Upton Sinclair, in Washington, says he's happy to be New Deal Democrat.... Upholsterers' strike wins in New York. . . . Eight billion dollars lent in 18 months by government chiefly to banks and corporations assuring their profits, new report by Donald Richberg reveals. . . . Chicago cleaners' and dyers' industry locks out 2,000 workers.

Thursday—Acting "Dictator" Huey Long moves entire National Guard into New Orleans; father of guardsman wires Senator Long he'll kill him "like

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the mad dog you are" if harm comes to his son. . . . Horst Company Ranch, Dallas, Tex., largest hop yard in world, tied up by strike. . . . Strike at Brooklyn Edison Company averted when company reinstates discharged workers. . . . Army's "paper war" ends with imaginary invading "enemy" left "helpless." . . . Relief funds must be guarded "very carefully for those actually in need" Harry L. Hopkins, Federal Relief Administrator, declares in beginning new drive to limit relief rolls. . . . Mrs. Mooney's funeral cortege will halt at San Quentin in effort to permit Tom Mooney to take last look at mother.

Friday—Six strikers killed, 30 wounded in Honea Path, S. C., when deputized strike-breakers massacre pickets, using guns and revolvers; textile strike death toll now 10. . . . International Ladies' Garment Workers Union orders strike involving 150,000 unless trade makes effective Roosevelt order for 10 percent cut in hours, 10 percent wage rise. . . . Matthew Woll in Newark speech asks capital and labor to unite to defeat Communists "seeking to prevent amicable settlement" of general textile strike. . . . Thirty relief strikers injured in Phoenix, Ariz., when police with clubs and tear-gas bombs charge picket line. . . . Soviet-U.S. debt talks again break up when State Department refuses to consider latest Soviet offer. . . . Huey Long mobilizes troops preparatory to declaring New Orleans under full martial law.

Saturday—Perkins brands as "dangerous and unfortunate" deputizing Honea Path strike-breakers, admitting action was responsible for 6 deaths. . . . Honea Path victims given mass funeral attended by 10,000 workers. . . . Rains bring slight relief in Kansas drought area. . . . Schools reopen Monday under increasing "economy programs." . . . "Economic emergency is worse than war," Justice Strahl, Brooklyn municipal court, declares, ruling worker is entitled to sue employer for wages under N.R.A. . . . Workingman's funeral given Mrs. Mooney after cortege is not permitted to stop at San Quentin.

Sunday—Cotton-textile employers reject union plan for arbitration . . . Eight white men convicted in Manchester, Tenn., of murdering Negro tenant farmer and sentenced to jail. . . . Socialist Party nominates Mayor Jasper McLevy of Bridgeport for Governor of Connecticut. . . . New York restaurants plan to raise prices "to save industry from financial ruin." . . . U. S. has risen out of depths of its worst depression, is now on the upgrade, says Donald Richberg, in report revealing huge imperialist war preparations. . . . William Hodson, New York Commissioner of Public Welfare, asks public to snoop by reporting cases of families getting relief and "not entitled to it." . . . A. F. of L. delegates of 22 locals vote for drive to obtain passage of Workers Unemployment Insurance Bill.

Monday—Federal employes' retirement fund "insolvent," with government $2,000,000 in arrears to it, E. C. Babcock, president of the American Federation of Government Employes charges. . . . Insull's collapsed Middle West Utilities Company to be reorganized. . . . Houde Engineering Co., Buffalo, defies Labor Board ruling on majority rule in collective bargaining of labor. . . . Gov. Brann, Maine, reelected first Democratic Governor in State's history to be elected twice.

Tuesday—Eight textile strike pickets shot, 132 persons wounded as National Guard and deputies attack picket line at Sayville, R. I. . . . Foreign governments protest against disclosures made public at munitions probe. . . . Furniture Workers' Industrial Union wins victory when Newark Federal Court refuses injunction against picketing in Jersey City, where Corliss Lamont and Alfred M. Bingham were arrested, 13 pickets convicted and 4 indicted.

# The Morro Castle Mystery

THE MORRO CASTLE, Havana-New York pleasure ship, of the Ward Line, carrying a passenger list of 318, and a crew of 244, blazed up early in the morning, as the boat moved through fog and storm up the Jersey coast. According to the testimony of Acting Captain William F. Warms, the fire was first reported to him at approximately 2.45. Saturday morning. In 25 minutes the ship became a roaring inferno, the entire midships blazing, tongues of fire shooting up from Deck B, the passenger deck which contained the saloon, the library, the ballroom, and the cabins. In the first frenzy that followed, according to the story, men and women flung themselves into the sea, the firehoses refused to work, the lifeboats on the portside were burned on their davits. A revised list puts the dead and missing at 135.

The Morro Castle, beached at Asbury Park, provided a ghoulish Roman holiday for the Chamber of Commerce, as hundreds of thousands of curiosity-seekers rushed to the scene. It is also providing one of the most sensational admiralty inquiries in years, with conflicting testimony and the shut-mouth policy of the Ward Line keeping the actual origin of the fire, and the reasons for its devastating progress, a mystery. The clearest feature of the inquiry in its early stages was the effort of the Ward Line to direct suspicion at some "unknown incendiary" and thus try to escape huge damage suits.

It is quite evident that the legal brain of Chauncey Clark, counsel for the Ward Line, has hatched a pretty formula for safeguarding the profits and capital of his employers, the ship owners. The caution with which Chief Officer Warms guarded his public utterances until an elapsing day had permitted him to partake of the legal astuteness of Mr. Clark, and the pat story of the "unknown incendiary" which was presented at the first public hearing of the case, indicate that Mr. Clark had assisted in unveiling the mystery of the Morro Castle.

Mr. Clark remembered that the sinking of the Vestris, a few years ago, off the Virginia Capes, brought with it a thousand damage suits totaling $5,000,000. The echo of Mr. Warms' voice had not yet died out of the Customs House, when the Grace Line was taking up the cry that fires of "unknown" origin, one of which had broken out on their ship, the Santa Ruz, was really the work of an "international radical ring."

And in Havana, chief of port police, Senor Oscar Hernandez, declared that

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*B. Limbach*

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in his estimation the fire on the Morro Castle was deliberately set by an agent of the "Carribean Section of the Third International." It can be pointed out here that the Grace Line, for some time, has been trying to force a company union down the throats of its seamen. This is the Grace Line Association, for which it is reported that the seamen voted overwhelmingly "yes." On the beach, on the waterfront, they will tell you, that every ship, with the exception of one, on the Grace Line, voted "no" to the company union, and that, on the one exception, the vote was never disclosed. As for Senor Hernandez, who has aided the Mendieta Government in driving the revolutionary workers from the Havana docks, who helped load the Morro Castle with scab labor, his Carribean Section of the Third International is an invention as raw as the Protocols of Zion or the supposed plan for the burning of the Reichstag. It is not new, not well prepared, even for the accomplished propagandists who make the charges against the Communists. They have done much better in the past. At least Goering planned his incendiarism with a degree of cunning.

But though the "red scare" story will fall through the weight of its own falseness, though the Grace Line will find that the Morro Castle will make poor capital for its own company union, many puzzling and inexplicable circumstances still surround the burning of this big steamship.

The Morro Castle was a new boat, built in 1930, valued at $5,000,000. During its last cruise that ended off the coast of Sea Girt, New Jersey, in flame and smoke, it carried a crew of 244 seamen. A full crew, according to the sailors, for a ship the size of the Morro Castle, would be about 275 hands. The shorthandedness was in the steward's department. The significance of this lies in the fact that it is the stewards who have the responsibility for seeing that the passengers know how to adjust their life belts, and operate the emergency exits. The stewards aboard the Morro Castle were working an average of 14 to 16 hours a day, and during the emergency, the shorthandedness assumed great significance.

Further, it is claimed that because she was a quick turnabout ship, not much time was left for repair work when she was in port. Although nothing has been said as yet at the investigation, seamen have reported that the extension rods, overboard valves, sea cocks and main firevalves, reaching down from the boat deck, were broken. No explanation has been given as yet why, when the blaze roared through B deck, the fire hoses did not pump water. Nor have the officers explained why, when the firedoors could be controlled automatically from five central points of the ship, it was necessary for the crew to force them shut with iron bars—a fact disclosed privately by seamen—although the chief engineer categorically testified the firedoors were not closed.

Other questions:

Why does John Kaempf of the New York Fire Department, a passenger aboard, claim that the fire was burning fiercely and out of control at 12.45, standard time, Saturday morning while Chief Officer Warms contends that the fire was first reported to him at nearly 3 o'clock?

Why was the S.O.S. call delayed until past 3.15?

How was it possible for the blaze to sweep with such appalling rapidity the entire midships in so short a time, even granting the strong draughts in the passageways?

Did the Acting Captain William F. Warms deliberately gamble with the lives of hundreds of his passengers in order to save the Ward Line the salvage fees an S.O.S. would entail?

These and other questions shroud the origin and course of the big ship blaze. Testimony by other members of the crew and passengers may help to clear up the mysteries. Meanwhile, the seamen of the Morro Castle are stranded in New York, their clothes and money destroyed by the flames, uncertain whether or not the Ward Line will make any effort to compensate them.

# The International Gunmen

THOUGH the Senate Munitions Investigation. under the captainship of Senator Gerald P. Nye, "insurgent" Republican of North Dakota, has hardly got out of sight of land it has already revealed an impressive collection of graft, scandal, and corruption. It is dubious, however, if it will be allowed to proceed much farther. Secretary Hull has already begun protesting against its disclosures of government connivance with munitions makers, it has committed acts of *lèse majesté* in showing up King George V as a supersalesman of super-armaments, it has besmirched the name of the saintly Calvin, and if it proceeds much farther into the sacrosanct realms of Navy-Second-to-None Roosevelt it may hit a submerged mine that will blow it out of the water.

The investigation already shows a few signs of slowing up, but the letters, reports and statements it has produced are sufficient to prove that no racket ever invented by underworld punks and gunmen can touch, so far as corruption and double-crossing are concerned, the various exploits of the munitions makers. But the most important fact the investigation has brought out is not so much the corruption or the international intrigues which the munition makers have fostered as the fact that the War, Navy and State Departments of this country are being used by them during times of peace as salesmen for all the instruments of war.

Three major concerns have, at the time we go to press, been investigated—the Electric Boat Co., the Driggs Ordnance and Engineering Co., and the great British semi-official surplus-arms corporation, Soley and Co., Ltd. And in each case testimony has proved that members of the Navy, the Army or the State Departments have done their utmost to sell the goods which these concerns handle or manufacture.

*Driggs.* This company manufactures heavy artillery, particularly anti-aircraft guns. After selling $1,800,000 worth of guns to Poland, Louis L. Driggs, president of his company, could not contain his admiration for the U. S. War Department. "Except for the support of your department," he wrote in a letter to Major-General Samuel Hof of the United States Army, "we have for several years carried on this fight for foreign business single-handed."

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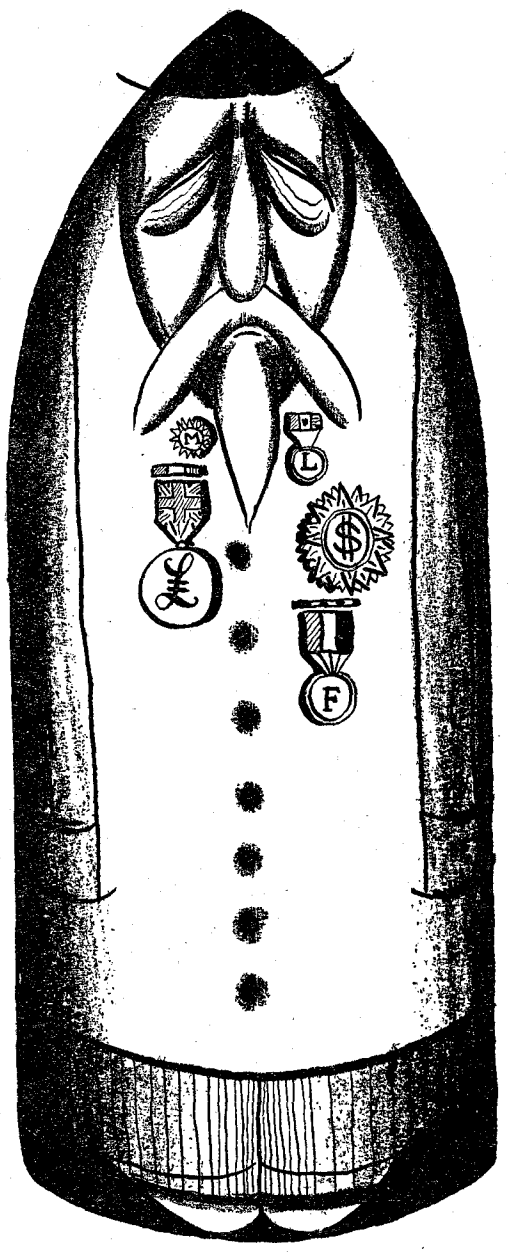
Mr. Driggs was hardly fair. The Navy Department had also exerted every effort to bring his company profits. It had, indeed, according to testimony, dispatched a cruiser to Turkey so that the Turks might look over several improved anti-aircraft guns which the United States Navy had developed at the expense of $2,000,000. Though Navy officers were instructed to help the Driggs company in every way to sell the guns to the Turks, Mr. Drigg's did not get the order. His agent complained that Vicker's, Ltd., was using dirty tactics in Constantinople by employing "women of doubtful reputation" to persuade the Turkish officials that the British guns were more efficient.

Testimony before the committee shows, however, that not only were "women of doubtful reputation" used by Vickers to defeat the government-backed salesmanship of Mr. Driggs. For though the American manufacturer wrote that the War Department was "cooperating 100 percent" in permitting him to use the latest American designs, His Majesty, George V, threw a wrench into the works, by intervening in favor of Vickers when the Driggs company attempted to sell anti-aircraft guns to Poland. Poor Mr. Driggs not only had scarlet women but kings to compete with. Even American salesmanship can't break through that!

*Soley and Company.* This company, evidence disclosed, controls something like $30,000,000 worth of outmoded equipment which the British government is eager to unload on small-time nations, preferably in South America. The head of the concern is John Ball of London whose letters to his American agent were read at the investigation. Though he acts as president of his concern, he is in fact only a sales agent for the British War Office which is eager to unload its surplus material.

Granted that a government had the money to buy the munitions, the British War Office has for sale through Soley and Company a sufficient amount to alter the balance of power of smaller nations, among its neighbors. As Ball writes, in a letter made public at Washington, "The stocks we control are of such magnitude that the sale of a big block of them could alter the political balance of power of the smaller states, involving corresponding complications from the point of view of finance and industry."

*The Electric Boat Company.* This American firm, which deals in submarines exclusively, has powerful European



ZAHAROFF *Mackey*

connections and, if the reported testimony may be accepted, stops at nothing to sell its goods. Sir Basil Zaharoff, whose ability at greasing statesmen, or, as he expressed it in a phrase which has already become famous, "doing the needful," is part owner of the concern and its European agent to whom it has paid more than $2,000,000 during recent years for "services rendered." Whenever Sir Basil, the world's foremost exponent of mass murder, comes around one can be pretty certain that graft, corruption and intrigue are not far behind.

Sir Basil's most effective sales talk is "palm oil" and his most ready clients are politicians. Executives of the Electric Boat Company have profited greatly from his advice. They listened to him when he wrote advising that they bring pressure on the State Department to help the Boat Company peddle its submarines in Spain. If the State Department acted, Sir Basil wrote, "I will have no difficulty in persuading the British to do it too, ditto, ditto." The State Department at once sent a note to the American Ambassador in Spain and the Electric Boat Company gladly paid Sir Basil his commission.

Under the approval of the State Department the Electric Boat Company held a conference in Turkey for the purpose of selling submarines. In order to make their sales-talk more effective, the company brought along two United States Admirals, H. E. Long and Hilary Jones. Unfortunately the worthy Admirals, however earnest they may have been in extolling the products of the Electric Boat Company, failed to get an order for the company.

The company also maintained a lobbyist at Washington who fought valiantly for bigger and better naval appropriations. If we can believe his letters to his employers he passed practically all the naval appropriations himself. "Our legislative efforts have borne fruit," he wrote to his superiors. Through his blandishments, he boasted, two friendly Republican Congressmen had been placed on the powerful House Rules Committees and were ready to go through fire to see that the Electric Boat Company got orders from everywhere. He also announced that he had been successful in lobbying through a $3,000,000 claim against the government and he ended his glowing letter with the statement that members of the Navy Department had congratulated him "on the success of such parts of the program as we were directly interested in."

So go the revelations which the munitions investigation has unearthed. There is little doubt, however, that only the surface has been scratched for in the welter of testimony there are implications of even greater corruption and intrigue than the committee has yet produced. But that we will hear more scandal becomes more dubious as the investigation goes on. Governments—the executive committees of the ruling classes—are soft-hearted parents to their children, the munition makers, even if they do occasionally sell armaments to the enemy. They have to be coddled, they have to be helped along when nations are not murdering each other and business is slack. And if we are not very much mistaken the present investigation will begin listening to voices higher up before they come out with the real dirt about the men who batten on slaughter.

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# Behind the Headlines

## JACKSON X. CURRY

WASHINGTON, D. C.

FRANCIS J. GORMAN, Vice-President and Special Strike Committee Chairman of the United Textile Workers of America, has the Washington correspondents exclaiming at the big-time manner in which A. F. of L. Napoleons are generalling the strike.

Strike headquarters are located in the well-appointed offices of Chester M. Wright (once managing editor of the Socialist Party's defunct Call, now assistant to the affluent Red-Baiter Matthew Woll, and all-round ghost writer and publicity man for the A. F. of L.). Stenographers, clerks, the familiar staccato of the news ticker, news-reel men, half a dozen ringing telephones, an impressive map, staff members bent over speeches which soon will be recited or released by Gorman, girls pounding out stencils, comfortable desks and chairs —all the paraphernalia the financial newspaperman is accustomed to seeing in Eugene Grace's Bethlehem Steel offices or in some other industrialist's niche in the neighborhood of Broad and Wall Streets.

Of course, the New Deal publicity set-up, even if multiplied a hundred times, would have availed Gorman and his A. F. of L. clique little with the big newspapers if they had not screamed unceasingly for "faith in the President," and tirelessly reiterated their plaint that they were not striking "against the government or the code," but against "management."

Despite the fact that the N.R.A. Code Authority *is* "management"-in-person and that the $12-$13 cotton textile code was signed by the President (government) and formulated by the textile operators and the MacMahon-Gorman leadership, of the U. T. W., the capitalist press carried many thousands of words picturing Gorman as a sort of Yorkshire-born lad fighting desperately against mill owners with medieval minds. The Daily Worker was the only English-speaking newspaper to point out the discrepancy between the specified wage demands of the U. T. W. Convention—from $13 a week for unskilled to $30 for highly skilled operators; specified demands as to loomage—and Gorman's general demands for union recognition, abolition of the stretchout, and vague increases in the higher brackets. Nor did the newspapers explain that nothing was said in the Convention about compulsory or any other kind of arbitration. It was a strike convention. Fortunately or unfortunately for the A. F. of L. big shots, the demand for recognition of the U. T. W. couldn't be emasculated.

When the textile workers called for a strike they meant *strike*. Roosevelt countered with one of his typical "mediation" boards. Gorman greeted it warmly. An outfit that would not "begin with a cut and dry program." One that would "devote some time to exploration of the field." All this before Gorman had even seen the text of the executive order creating the Board, and despite his previous repeated excoriations of all government boards as snares and traps for workers. The workers, he had said a hundred times, were "sick and tired of boards." And furthermore, Gorman announced a month or so after the job the N.R.A. did on San Francisco marine workers and shortly after N.R.A. Counsellor Richberg's own report showed a 1.1 percent drop in the worker's real wage in the period from June 1933 to June 1934, and a concomitant 600 percent in corporation profits—furthermore Gorman declared, "The President has acted out of a spirit of helpfulness and because of his genuine concern for the welfare of the workers. We know that. We are following a program which we believe best calculated to aid the President in his heroic efforts to bring about real recovery and I think the President will fully appreciate that fact."

Still the employers refused to nibble at Gorman's N.R.A. ballyhoo and his "adjustments" tied onto the recognition of the U. T. W. So, chucking all the Convention demands, Gorman offered Sloan's gang an agreement to accept whatever decision the Winant Board should see fit to render. The employers let two 6 o'clock deadlines go by and Gorman was forced to "withdraw" his arbitration offer.

"The battle goes on." The stencils still clicked. "Our action demonstrated our great faith in the fairness and highmindedness of the President's Board . . . our generous gesture has been to no avail. Management seems still determined to ride high and ride hard, as it has always ridden . . .we have sought the way of peace from the beginning—from long before the strike. Peace is denied to us and we must face management on the field of conflict —with folded arms; they with paid thugs, militia, machine-guns and gas." The words were shoved into Gorman's mouth on the night the second ultimatum was ignored.

"Folded Arms" is truly a euphemism for the U. T. W. leadership's open discouragement of mass picketing and its cooperation with Green in stamping out the first suggestions from workers for sympathy strikes and in calling off a scheduled conference of other A. F. of L. national and international unions to wage a financial campaign in support of the strike. On the same night (three more workers slain) Gorman radioed to 500,000 desperate workers: "We shall win because our cause is just. The lines will be tightened. New orders go to all local unions and division headquarters tomorrow. Management has decreed that the strike must go on. We decree that it shall be won. All strikers: Hold the lines and stand by for instructions No. 8."

The relationship of forces makes it necessary for Gorman, whether he likes it or not, to swell the ranks of the strikers by the effectiveness of the strike publicity machine he was forced to construct. The publication of strike telegrams, the issuance of mounting totals, irrespective of the motive behind them, militate to extend the strike. How long Gorman will do this is difficult to say, but for the time being he must save his face with one side of his mouth while he talks to Sloan, Winant and Hyde Park with the other.

# *Notes on New England*

## WALDO FRANK

NEW BEDFORD, MASS.

AT DAWN, they are all outside the mills: men, girls, mothers with children. The huge structure submerged in mist, leaps suddenly with lights; the gates swing open; nobody goes in. The men talk in lively groups, the mothers smile, the girls have put on their glad rags and there is song in their throats. At the doors stand a few guards, glumly: in half an hour, they swing the gates shut and the lights snap out. The crowd of strikers, sure of its strength, strolls up the long flank of the mill; stretches in the morning sun; idles down to the next mill where stands another crowd before the shut doors.

The strike has begun gaily. Men and women have joy of themselves in their common purpose, like a young animal discovering the beauty and health and potency of its body.

Over on the North Side, before the open gates of a mill stands another crowd of strikers. Half a dozen girls pass forward, their heads a little low, their shoulders hunched. They are going to work. As the guards let them in, women call after them: "Ain't you ashamed!"; men mutter angry and then ugly words. The thousand strikers understand the six disloyal girls; a sharp doubt stirs in them all, particularly in the women. "We need the money too . . . maybe they're right. Maybe we'll lose and only those girls will win. . . . Rent . . . milk . . . coal . . . winter coats for the children." The strikers are murmuring against their own fears . . . the faithful presence of poverty and cold . . . which they see personified in the six girls. They are at work, now. The mill has become the form of betrayal and of the fear of the strikers. Already the holiday mood is gone.

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# in the Textile Strike

II

Fall River moulders in the ruins of an industrial era. Small mills, built like castles with colonial windows and ivy on the brick, a half century ago, have been abandoned to the sweatshop rats. And the wood houses of the workers have died into festering shanties, the streets are rank as rotten teeth. A man climbs the outside stair of one of the houses and enters a room, at dawn. A mother stands already at the stove; three men bend over a mimeograph machine in the far corner; and from two cots four children eagerly look up at the comrade.

He takes a leaflet, reads it, and nods. "Here's another we need at once." The children hear the words: ". . . the independent unions . . . because they hate the U. T. W. [United Textile Workers' Union] they won't come out. We got to show 'em that they must come out. We got to make 'em see, even if the A. F. of L. did doublecross 'em, we must stick together . . . Show 'em . . . Make 'em see."

The men huddle again over the mimeograph machine. One of them is Portuguese, and the first shaft of sun lights his fine hard mouth; another is a French Canadian, lumberly, musical, as if a Northern spruce were walking the world. The man who has come in with the stencil of the new leaflet is a Yankee with the lantern-jaw and gangling limbs of his Puritan forefathers.

"Here, you drink coffee first," sings the mother.

"No time—"

"You drink coffee first," she insists.

III

Back in the South Side of New Bedford, five thousand strikers gather around the bandstand of a park to hear their leaders. Nearby, the harbor waters dance in the morning sun, dance up to the shadow of the silent mills. But a little farther there is a line of mills a-throb with labor: the great tire-fabric plants called the Fisk and the Devon, which recognize no union and worked clear through the six-months strike of 1928.

William Batty, chairman of the strike committee of the U. T. W., gets to his feet. He is a burly fellow with a sharp nose on his red face, and piercing eyes. He praises the strikers, he praises the President, he hurls his contempt and hate at the "Reds who are trying to make trouble." One gets the impression, as he talks, that the strike is his—and the other leaders'—and the workers are accessories and servants. "Leave it all to us," is the burden of his message. "Washington" — a sacrosanct word; "Strike headquarters in the Carpenters Building"—a Temple which only U. T. W. leaders are good enough to enter. The man has power, and has shrewdness. No doubt of that. Look at the heavy shoulders, the thin-lipped mouth. But where does he belong? He is standing on the bandstand a bit above the workers, he is talking a good deal down to them: one hears, in the rumble of his hatred for Communists and shop-committees, the echo of other voices, more shrewd, more potent: voices of politics and Money.

After Batty comes Ferdinand Sylvia, U. T. W. organizer and local favorite, who is running for State representative on the Democratic ticket. A little, passionate Portuguese he is, and clever. The hard black eyes are nobody's fool. How he praises the workers! "I am proud of you. You are making history today. We got a great friend in the White House who will help us against the bosses . . . All you got to do is stick together. We'll go back to Washington and do the rest." There is no personal enthusiasm in the crowd for these leaders. But there is devotion to the cause which these men lead; and above all there is the will, tense and a little wistful, to believe that they are truly leaders.

Sylvia speaks of the tire-fabric mills that are still working and holding New Bedford from a 100 percent tie-up. "Go down and picket," he cries. "Get them all out!" And the mass, five thousand strong, moves quietly down the harbor.

IV

A youth with the high forehead of a poet starts the picket line before the Fisk and the Devon. Batty waves the crowd on the opposite side of the street, to join; and soon a couple of hundred men, women, girls, are patroling the plant. They are having a good time. They sing "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf" and, in lesser number, the old I. W. W. "Solidarity" song.

I slip into the office and ask for the manager. He says he'll talk to me, provided I do not disclose his name for publication. (I do not blame him.) The same stale line about his "happy family of workers," and the conscientious refusal to let "outside and alien organizers interfere in our affairs."

"But," I ask, "aside from the issue of wages, don't you recognize a democratic, an American, a human issue? Labor is struggling to organize, like the bosses and business and science. Aren't you working against the American spirit by discouraging your men to get together? You admit conditions are bad in other mills. Why don't you encourage these workers to help their brothers by joining the same union?"

The managerial eyes grow cold and blank; the hands twitch. Then, obliquely: "I don't get you. What good would it do if these men went out on strike with the others? If one is starving, is it better that two starve?"

I expected no better. But as I return to the town center (while the pickets march) for a bite to eat, I find that the waitress is on the side of the strikers: the barkeep opposite the best hotel, mixing me an excellent Tom Collins, says: "Sure the tire fabric mills should strike!" and the garage-mechanic who fills my tank is warmly and openly with the textile workers. This was not the case a few years ago. Even a cop on the corner confidentially leans to me and says: "I guess the boys have got it!"

Up in the Labor Temple a little Scot, Abraham Binns, sits at a desk and runs the works. Dispatches pickets to hesitant outlying mills; 'phones Washington, puffs his pipe, and wonders where the funds will come from to feed the strikers, if Federal Relief backs down. A sincere old-timer he is, with a good eye for the detail of the battle and no vaguest notion of what, *really,* the battle is about. A 30-hour week, a minimum wage? Sure! But that a world is breaking? A new world shall be born, lest the heart and body of mankind perish? . . . I ask him about the National Textile Workers' Union.

"They're Communists," he burrs, as if to say: "They've got smallpox and yellow fever."

The workers think they can make the bosses abolish the stretchout. Binns sees that, he'll fight for it, too. But he does not guess that what the workers really want is to live and *that they must create a new world to live in.* What chance has such a leader of labor against the shrewdly conscious Capital, which knows, indeed, that it is fighting *to live* and to preserve for itself a world to live in?

V

Yonder in Hazelwood Park, a young woman is talking, who knows what Binns and Batty have never dreamed of.

It is dusk of the first day. Seventeen thousand five hundred of the 20,000 textile workers of New Bedford have come out; the exceptions being those of the tire-fabric mills. The talker is Ann Burlak, organizer of the National Textile Workers' Union, herself a weaver and the child of Ukrainian workers of Northern Pennsylvania. The Boston and local papers have put the spotlight on Ann. She is the "red flame"; she is reputed to be "in hiding in the tenements of the South Side," and the police announce that they will run her in "on the slightest provocation."

Ann is a tall blond girl in her early twenties. Her body bespeaks tenderness and grace; you feel that, were it not for a stronger love, she'd spend a lot of her time dancing. The firm jaw, the clear eye, the intelligent brow, make you understand why there's so little time for dancing. On the bandstand, all around her, is a bunch of kids. They frolic about

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none too silent, in the way of children; and I wonder how she manages, with all this distraction, to keep her mind, and her hearers' minds, on her subject. The local N. T. W. organizer, Walter Burke, has the same concern; and he tries to shoo away the children. But he is far too gentle about it; the kids refuse to go; and when Burke observes that they are not troubling Ann, he gives up. Then it comes to me, that far from disturbing this reputed "fire-eater," the gathering of children, while Ann Burlak speaks, is the appropriate setting. For truly she is speaking for them, of the gay young world they can inherit, and will inherit, only if their parent-workers know what they want, and fight for it, and learn how to fight. For this "sensational agitator" is, in truth, simple, womanly, and tender: a girl whose motherliness has gone out, in canny earnest sense, to her people.

How different her tone from the U. T. W. leaders who harangued their crowd from the same stand. Ann Burlak appears to have faith in the workers and to be pleading with them to fight . . . to let no one else fight . . . their own battle. She has to go easy. If she tells them straight what their leaders are up to, dickering with politicians and capitalists, they will take fright. If she tells them straight the truth her heart is full of: they will turn pale, and glance about them with scared eyes, and cease to listen. It is a subtle task, this leading of the ignorant American workers to the realization of their own needs, of their own powers, of their own nature. Ann Burlak does it well: there is magnificence in her tact, and there is pathos. Gradually, unobtrusively, she leads her hearers to the facts about "arbitration," to the shortcomings of the U. T. W., to the single devotedness of the slandered "reds." And the men and women listen. They have come, many of them, to have a look at the "red flame," to have a good show for nothing. "They say she's hot stuff," explained the boys on the bench before me. Curiosity and frivolity fade, as the tall young woman gives her sensible heart and her motherly mind to her hearers. Mothers find themselves face to face with the truth: the bare cupboards of their homes, the bare bodies, the bare futures, of their children. Men see with their eyes what for long their hearts, despite the palaver of journal and politician, have known: that they, the workers, live in an enemy country! Latin, Slav or Yankee, they live in a land possessed and ruled by foes who are sworn to exploit and degrade them.

At the close of her pleading to the workers to know themselves, to respect themselves, to be themselves, Ann Burlak tries to make them sing. The men and women pitifully follow. And I am minded of the singing at a camp-meeting which I recently attended. How the words rang for Christ's second coming! Surely, had Christ been in the heaven, he must have answered these splendid ringing voices. And the thought came to me: When the workers of America learn to sing for the coming of their Revolution, as their fathers, the Christians, sang for their own pitiful and impossible magic, then the Revolution will not tarry.

### VI

It is midnight, after the first day. Around the Fisk and Devon mills, gravid with lights and labor, stand battalions of police: the comparatively kindly town cops with clubs, and the sinister khaki-clad motor-cops with guns in their visible holsters and tear-gas in reserve. On the park side are massed the strikers—a good ten thousand. Glenn Trimble, Socialist minister and editor of the U. T. W. Voice of Labor harangues them. "They won't let us picket? We'll see about that. All of you meet here at the crack of dawn. And when the workers file in to work, we'll have a picket line for them to pass through."

A Negro in the crowd says, in a quiet penetrant voice: "Why wait till tomorrow? Why not picket now?"

The crowd turns toward the mill; Trimble accepts the challenge, and walks down to head it. The police clubs stop them. The picket line halts, wavers, turns. And its repressed energy gathers in hands behind. Stones fly from the park side, and smash the mill windows. The police press forward.

Seven hours later, huge shut vans roll up to the red buildings and disgorge officers. Far off, beyond an empty lot, fully a fifth-mile from the mills, stands the crowd and boos as the tire-fabric workers pass through to their jobs. Near the gates, they stand in hesitant knots. A man stays behind, while his wife enters. A girl looks up at a bevy of her sisters beckoning from a top mill window, grasps her bag, and joins them. The police, guns swinging, slide across the empty lot and the workers fade in the grey harbor background.

"There'll be no picket line," shouts the police chief at Batty and Sylvia. "We had enough last night. Look at them windows. If your men come we'll take care of 'em."

But while the clubs and the guns mass at the Devon side of the huge block, and the crowds die, before them, another corps of workers comes to birth on the farther slope of the mills; a line forms . . .marches.

The sun rises, the mill throbs. The clusters of hesitant workers have vanished, either inside to work, or away. Suddenly, a gate swings open. The crowd rises in one voice: "THEY'RE COMING OUT!" And forward, four abreast, march the Fisk workers to join their brothers and sisters.

Sylvia crows like a cock. "I'm proud of you!" And to Mary Vorse and me: "Tell 'em in Washington and New York that New Bedford has the world's best workers." Even the cops smile. The walk-out is 100 percent.

I think of the heroic tiny groups of revolutionary organizers throughout the nation: individuals, isolate, threatened, resourceless save for their own luminous spirit. Pleading with the workers, to know themselves, to be themselves, to fight the good fight; while the official leaders and the pack of papers and the towns and the churches vomit their fear of the new world, in the form of insults and lies.

I think of the great show of strength that the Textile Strike—like San Francisco yesterday—has summoned. And of the inevitable betrayal, while Ignorance is in the saddle. When the American workers *know* what they are, there'll be a different story.

The Body of American labor is hale, strong, ready. *Ready to learn.*

## *Paterson's Dye Workers*

### STEVE FOSTER

PATERSON, N. J.

THE forces at work in the strike of 13,000 Paterson textile workers are more complex than those agitating the Southern and New England textile areas. The main industries in Paterson are silk weaving and silk dyeing upon which the economic life of the town is, to a great extent, dependent. In the past, much of the town's wealth grew out of the silk business because of its continual mounting wage volume; Paterson was the silk center, the birthplace of the silk industry, where 70 percent of the nation's looms wove silk into cloth. Today, compared to a total national loomage of 133,000, Paterson has 19,000 looms or an average of 15 percent of the nation's silk weaving looms. The population from 1920 to 1933 has increased from 135,875 to 140,000, but the average number of wage earners has decreased. In the Paterson industries as a whole, the wage volume has fallen from $45,826,045, reached in the peak year, 1927, to $28,530,199 in 1931, the final year for which statistics are available.

The Chamber of Commerce figures for the industries of Paterson are:

| *Year* | *No. of Estab.* | *Average No. of Wage Earners* | *Wages* | *Value of Products* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1919 | 1,044 | 37,217 | $38,597,000 | $216,659,000 |
| 1921 | 1,000 | 31,345 | 35,427,401 | 161,146,296 |
| 1923 | 1,004 | 33,247 | 41,276,966 | 194,857,975 |
| 1925 | 1,087 | 33,779 | 45,003,375 | 200,976,520 |
| 1927 | 1,120 | 32,354 | 45,826,045 | 207,469,696 |
| 1929 | 915 | 32,686 | 44,030,942 | 197,650,980 |
| 1931 | 682 | 23,429 *(lowest since 1899)* | 28,530,199 | 114,487,179 |

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Strike struggles which were drawn out and bitterly fought, and the general economic crisis have added to the continued impoverishment of this textile community.

Because of the great cost of the strike conflicts, many owners of silk mills evacuated and set up shop in the South, in small Pennsylvania towns, in New England, in towns whose proletariat was unorganized and provided cheaper labor, towns that offered tax-free land and various privileges and concessions to manufacturers settling there, and towns that had never known industrial conflict.

And Paterson has been the scene of famous class battles. Its proletariat is highly politicalized and class-conscious. Again and again, in 1913, 1919, 1924, 1928, 1931 and 1933, it has gone out on the picket line, has closed shops and mills and, though it has been often betrayed by its leaders and has lost strikers, it has hungered and starved and fought courageously for its demands. Seven or eight years ago a weaver earned as much as $50 per week; today he is lucky to average $10 per week. That is reason enough why the Paterson silk workers are again out on strike. They demand a 30-hour week, with 40-hour pay, a five-day week—6 hours each day, two 30-hour shifts, abolition of the stretchout, and recognition of the union.

Public opinion in Paterson is sympathetic towards the strikers. The middle and lower-middle class are dependent for its existence largely upon the wage earnings of the working-class. As a local paper editorialized: "With higher wages, the workers will be able to spend more among our merchants. They will be in a better position to continue control of their little homes and meet their various obligations. As it now stands, there are few of the silk mill employes who could have continued their payments on their homes from the wages received at the mills."

In Paterson, where the majority of the workers were organized in the American Federation of Silk Workers, affiliated with the United Textile Workers, the National Textile Workers' Union voted to merge with the A.F.S.W. so as to have one union, one strike, one set of strike demands and one rank and file strike committee in order to assure the success of the General Strike. This action was cheered and applauded by 15,000 textile and dye workers assembled at the Hinchcliffe Stadium meeting on Labor day.

The sentiment of the rank and file textile worker for one union, which has existed as its ideal for years, forced the leaders of the A.F.S.W. to agree to the merger. The N.T.W. won the right to seat two of its members, Luigi Valgo and Moe Brown, Communist candidate for Governor of New Jersey, on the Broad Silk Executive Board. Other demands of the N.T.W. were adopted by the Executive Board of the A.F.S.W., but were referred for final adoption to the general membership of the union.

However, Eli Keller, general manager of the local branch of the A.F.S.W., the Associated Silk Workers, has refused to recognize the right of Moe Brown to a seat on the Executive Board and, because he fears removal from office, he has issued through the Joint Board, consisting of the paid officials of the union, the order that no membership meeting would take place until after the strike. By this means he controls the situation. There is no elected rank and file strike committee. The strike committee can only recommend a possible course of action to the Joint Board. The Joint Board does not issue orders of its own, with an eye to the local situation, but receives and accepts orders from the National Strike Committee, headed by Francis J. Gorman, at its Washington headquarters.

Among the strikers, although there is no organized opposition, there is resentment against Keller's methods of conducting the strike. Very few mass meetings are held and mass-picketing rarely takes place. Telegrams are exchanged with the National Strike Committee. Committees are sent back and forth to and from Washington. There is anger and dissatisfaction at the almost criminal negligence of the Strike Committee which has done nothing to strike the vitally strategic silk dyeing plants, though the dye workers are anxious and willing to come out in support of the National Textile Strike.

A move toward extending the strike on the part of the strike committee would inspirit the silk strikers towards militant action, assure the success of the textile strike in Paterson and substantially aid the nation-wide textile walkout.

A strike of dyers in Paterson would bring out 20,000 dye workers in the Passaic Valley area. Seventy-five percent of the silk goods production of the nation is dyed and printed in the Paterson district. A strike in the silk dyeing plants would practically cripple the whole silk and rayon industry in the Passaic Valley and the metropolitan area, and it would insure the success of the Paterson strike.

But Mr. Keller seems to be interested in preserving the "family" mills (small dyeing and printing plants) from such disaster.

The owners of these mills, organized in the Institute of Printers and Dyers, and similar associations, have raised a great hullabaloo in the local press concerning the obligations of the unions to abide by a contract which requires that Paterson dye mills can be called out on strike solely when 40 percent of the nation's dye houses quit. The manufacturers themselves, it is well-known, have been regularly breaking the contract.

To abide by the contract and then call a strike of dye workers after the expiration of the agreement on October 24, 1934, would serve to isolate the dye workers and minimize their chances of achieving their demands.

One of the reasons why the 1933 textile strike in Paterson was broken was because the Southern mills were able to send their products to the Paterson dye plants to be printed and dyed.

If the dyers quit their jobs, they strike in unity with 500,000 other textile workers and they have that much support. Their chances for winning their demands are so much greater.

In this crucial situation the National Textile Workers' Union has taken the initiative and offered to merge with the United Textile Workers' Union. The N.T.W. has a 50 percent influence among the workers in the United Piece Dye plant in Lodi, New Jersey, on the outskirts of Paterson. The United Piece Dye, one of the largest dye plants in the area, has two mills in Paterson, whose workers belong to the U.T.W. The N.T.W. members at Lodi have voted to strike and are awaiting a strike call. If the Lodi workers quit work they may start a walkout that will spread throughout the New Jersey area.

As this is written there has been no official response from the United Textile Workers' Union to the offer to merge and form one strike committee, one picket line, and to maintain unity in the struggle for the demands of the workers. The dye workers under the U.T.W. leadership are anxious to strike and await a signal from their leaders. Their leaders are doing little in preparation for conducting such a strike. But there is constant pressure from below which may force the leaders into action. The Silk and Dye Worker, organ of the American Federation of Silk Workers, published in its September 7th issue the headline "Dyers to Strike Monday." Monday, September 10th, dawned and the strike of dyers did not materialize.

Meanwhile Mr. Keller and his associates twiddle their thumbs and await a telegram from Washington, which may order the dye workers to walk out on strike.

## *The South's Attack on the Worker's Health*

### HERBERT GERRITT, M.D.

THE economic status of the textile worker has been clearly brought out in the present strike. The low wages, the brutality of the stretchout, the persecution of workers who attempt to organize or better their conditions have received justified emphasis. But that is not the whole story. The vivid and awful consequences of economic oppression as reflected in the health of the textile worker and his family have not been adequately described. It is especially the plight of the Southern textile worker that cries for exposure.

First let us sweep away a little myth that has been widely circulated lately in public health circles and also in the bourgeois press. Statistics are cited showing that the total death rate, infant and tuberculosis mortality in the

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general population have declined during the past four years of severe economic stress to the lowest figures on record. This has led sanitarians and editorial writers to conclude "that reduced excesses of eating and drinking and the lessened nervous tension that accompanies the quieter life of hard times have actually improved health." This conclusion is based on the number of people *dying* each year. Actually, mortality is a poor index of the health of the people. The death rate does not indicate the extent or nature of 99 percent of illnesses that are not fatal (influenza, colds, grippe, skin diseases, etc.) or of physical impairments (such as malnutrition) that take their toll in chronic debility and in illnesses that appear years later.

Besides, an actual increase in mortality among the unemployed could have taken place, but would not be apparent because of lack of statistics on the morbidity and mortality of that large section of the population, the unemployed; and because such an increase would be masked by the downward trend among the more prosperous elements of the population. This discrepancy between mortality figures and the real health of the people must be borne in mind constantly.

Conditions in the textile mills offer the first severe test to the worker's endurance. Even in the best-regulated mills of the North, the worker is constantly confined in a dusty atmosphere filled with short cotton fibres, vegetable débris, spores, molds, sand and metallic particles. Ventilation and lighting are generally poor. It is the high temperature and humidity, however, that constitute the principal menace to the health of the worker. The many machines revolving rapidly create a temperature varying from 80 to 102 degrees. The average temperature, summer and winter, is 85 degrees. The air must be saturated with moisture to prevent the electricity in the cotton from breaking the thread. The enervating effects of high temperature and humidity are well known. The textile worker labors day after day under such conditions, producing, according to a *Bulletin of the U.S. Public Health Service,* a higher relative index for debility and exhaustion among textile workers than for all other occupations. The data in this *Bulletin* were collected over a number of years up to 1930. With the institution of the stretchout, the index can only go higher.

There is an extremely high incidence of cerebral hemorrhage and degenerative diseases of the heart, kidney and blood vessels among textile workers.

Outside the mill, in the mill village, the southern textile worker and his family are subjected to a steady barrage of threats to health. Pellagra is one of the principal menaces. It is a disease due to the lack of essential foods in the diet, such as milk, butter, fresh vegetables and meats.

Tuberculosis, a disease of the working class, finds a favorable soil for development among textile workers. The mortality is considerably higher than the average for all occupied males. There are no diagnostic health stations in the Southern villages, and even when the diagnosis is established the modern surgical methods in the treatment of tuberculosis cannot be applied because of inadequate hospital and sanatorium facilities. There are only two sanatoria in the entire South that are recognized by the American Medical Association as fit to train a physician in lung diseases.

Of the forty-six counties in South Carolina, nineteen have no regular health service at all. During an outbreak of diphtheria in one mill village an investigator asked the manager of the mill why all the children had not been immunized. The reply was, "I have never been told about it before." Physicians are employed by industrial plants in Mississippi and other states on a competitive bid basis. The physician must pay for all medicines and operations, even the extraction of teeth. Naturally, he is not interested in any preventive campaign since he must bear the expense.

Typhoid fever is a minor factor as a cause of death in the Northern states. The death rate for typhoid among the Southern whites is nearly four times that of the Northern group of states, and among Negroes, nine times as great.

Another reflection of the criminally inadequate health service in the South is seen in the figures for malaria. In the New England and Middle Atlantic states only 83 cases and nineteen deaths were reported for 1932. In the Southern states 51,210 cases and 1,469 deaths were reported. The Anopheles mosquito is the carrier of the malaria parasite. Its habits are well-known, the methods of control of the disease, such as swamp drainage and screening, are definite, yet the number of cases has increased tremendously in the past two years. Alabama reported 2,004 cases in 1932 and 3,897 cases in 1933. Mississippi reported 36,133 cases in 1932. In 1933 for the first nine months 51,406 cases were reported. This increase has been uniform throughout the South, and Southern state health offices predict that it will continue. Many states report that, due to greatly curtailed budgets, the usual anti-malarial activities were greatly reduced and in many cities completely abandoned.

Relief for the striking Southern textile worker is urgently needed. The Committee for the Support of Southern Textile Organizations, of which Paul Peters, co-author of *Stevedore,* is chairman and Grace Hutchins, of the Labor Research Association, is secretary, has been at work for the past few months raising funds for relief and organizational work among the Southern textile workers. Sympathizers are urged to send contributions to the Strike Relief Section of the Committee at 509 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

# *Flying Squadrons in Connecticut*

## WALTER SNOW

WILLIMANTIC, CONN.

NOWHERE in Connecticut is a more fierce class war being waged than in this "Thread City" of 12,000 population.

With all roads leading into the Willimantic River Valley guarded by sub-machine guns fingered by State police, special deputy sheriffs and Motor Vehicle Department inspectors, ever since Thursday, Sept. 6, wave after wave of flying squadrons have swooped down in continually greater daily attacks. Held up each morning, thousands of militant textile strike pickets nevertheless manage to crash through the outlying battlefronts.

Scene of a bitter, year-long strike of 3,500 organized cotton thread workers in 1925 and of three smaller silk walk-outs in the past fourteen months, this city may soon leap into the front pages as the field of the next massacre.

The mobilized workers, hailing from scores of cities and towns in Connecticut and Rhode Island, promise to repeat their daily charges in ever greater tidal waves until they "pull" the last large textile plant to remain wide open in the two States—the Willimantic Mills of the American Thread Company, key center of the second largest concern in the trade.

This firm, with its Holyoke and Fall River, Mass., plants closed and with its smaller factories in Westerly, R. I., and Macon, Ga., reported virtually paralyzed, has daily flung back more brutal challenges of defiance. It is determined to centralize permanently most of its operations in Willimantic. During the past couple of days, it has increased its force from 1,700 to 2,000. It could employ 4,500.

Ten great mills rearing in threatening red brick, concrete and century-old stone above mouse-gray company houses on lower Main Street roar night and day. The poverty-imprisonment of 70 percent of their workers in those box-like structures or "private" homes owned by mill officials partly explains the reluctance to strike. Dispossessed during the 1925 walk-out, they were forced to live in swamp land tent colonies until snow-drifts piled high against shivering canvas. More than 1,000 scabs then were imported from Lowell and Fall River and hundreds of local "radicals," as the Catholic and Congregational unionists were termed, were blacklisted.

Today 90 percent of the unwilling "scabs," hundreds of them veterans of the 1925 struggle, want to walk out. But the Thread City is black with the State police of Connecticut's Rooseveltian Democratic Governor, the white-haired liberal Wilbur Cross, former Yale University dean. Armed cars with spotters visit the company houses. The National Guard has not been and probably won't be called out. The thread magnates are grimly efficient

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strike-breakers: they know that many guardsmen are pickets.

On Monday, Sept. 10, two companies of National Guards were sent to nearby Danielson to cope with a picket line of 1,500 that attempted to close the shipping department of the virtually struck Powdrell and Alexander curtain plant. They had to be sent there because only eight State cops were on duty, all the rest of the troopers, except scattered handfuls, and all of the Windham County thugs being concentrated in and around Willimantic.

In windows over the six gates and the five unenclosed doors are the blued steel mouths of sub-machine guns, the raw beef cheeks of State and city police and the pasty faces of special deputy sheriffs and company thugs.

Outside surge two shouting lines of Irish, Polish, French-Canuck and Yankee pickets. Only on Thursday, Sept. 6, were the out-of-town flying squadrons almost completely repulsed. Hundreds of mobilized pickets were driven back on Friday, but some 1,500 got through, the majority of them hours late for the 7 a.m. whistle. They joined 600 local strikers, who on Sept. 5 had completely shut down the affiliated Kobe Silk and Corn Spining plants.

This first outside wave to enter the town tramped the streets all day and night in a savage downpour. They kept most of the "loyal employes" from going out to lunch.

Nearly 1,000 invading pickets were routed on Monday, Sept. 10, on the four main highways leading to the city, but more than 2,000 finally surged through. The first repulsement, Thursday's, was due to the vehicle inspectors, who discovered a never-before enforced State law barring passengers from riding in trucks. Since then only potato trucks enter the town and they rumble over bumpy dirt roads until lifted burlap sacks eventually disclose the prone bodies of pickets.

It is impossible to enter Willimantic nowadays with a single cracked headlight glass or a slightly dim bulb even at high noon. A sixth person cannot ride in a five-passenger car. And a partially worn tire likewise means a summons. When the motorcade of which I was a member was halted at Sherman's Corner, seven miles north of Willimantic on the Putnam-Providence road, an hour elapsed before half of the flivvers got through and the buses were not tested until later. "Offenders" had to turn back unless they wished to walk.

"We'll start at 3 a.m. tomorrow," murmured a Putnam striker, who had participated in an earlier walk-out led by the National Textile Workers. "Gotta wise these U.T.W. officers up to a few things."

"I hope they bring 4,000 into town," a "loyal" swift spooler, with whom I worked before the 1925 strike, later told me. "This overtime won't last. For months before Labor Day I never averaged more than 15 hours a week, making just $6 or $7, and operating a machine and a half, thirty spindles. Years ago I could sometimes earn $30 on one machine."

# A Letter from America

## DAVID KINKEAD

EL PASO, TEXAS.

TEN O'CLOCK at night. Down by the railroad tracks. We walked in the back door of an enormous, old, dirty, dim-lighted bunk-crowded warehouse. The windows on both floors were cracked and cobwebbed. This was the federal flop-house (Government Transient Bureau to you, mister).

"Can we bunk here tonight?"

"You have to go over to 1200 Missouri Street to register, bud, across the tracks and to the left—you can't miss it."

We walked across the tracks and then to the left up dark Missouri Street, about a mile. We came to another building, a small replica of the first—dusty, old, dim-lighted. A bunch of comradely, lackadaisical guys were sitting around at tables scribbling, typing, chewing the fat or just sitting.

"You guys want to register?"

"Yeah."

"All right, you (pointing at me) come here and I'll get the dope on you, and you (pointing to Sprad) go tell that guy all about yourself."

I sat down at a table and for half an hour the guy took down every conceivable kind of information about me: name, age, place of and date of birth, nearest living relative, trade, longest job, what pay, last job and how much you got (when I told him I'd been driving a hack in Palm Springs twelve hours a day at twenty bucks a week he said, "My God, how'd you work that, I haven't seen twenty bucks a week in three years."), color, eyes, hair, skin, what nationality, ever had a serious illness, what's your hobby (that was the funniest one, why do they want to know your hobby—they asked one guy what his hobby was and he evidently didn't know what the word meant and answered "cotton picking," some hobby!), address of a friend, where from, where going, etc., etc.

When the questioning was over they gave us blue registration cards and dinner and breakfast tickets and told us to go to another joint a quarter of a mile down the street and get cleaned up and get something to eat. We walked down the street, went down into the basement of another old building like the other two. A guy at a window took our registration cards and food slips and gave us towels and some tiny squares of yellow soap. We went through a door into the shower room.

"Go take your clothes off in there and then come out and I'll give your your towels."

The floor was slippery with soap and water. The air was warm with the smell of steam, soap, dirty socks and stale sweat. We hung our clothes on a nail, went back and turned around (like mannikins) in front of the guy at the table. He said: "All right" and handed us our towels.

We walked gingerly, naked, across the slimy floor into the shower room, a small place with ten showers sticking out from the four walls, about half of them out of order. A fourteen-year-old kid was soaping himself with his eyes closed and saying to another fellow who was washing:

"My brother-in-law is the craziest guy I ever saw. He got in here with seventy-five cents. He went uptown with my sister but he didn't buy anything to eat. He blew his last seventy-five cents on a bull-pup. It wasn't enough for him to have a skirt tagging along after him. He had to buy a goddamn dog. Imagine a guy like that! Cripes!"

After showering we turned our towels back in at the window. The guy gave us our meal tickets. We went into the dining-room: a large room filled with long, dirty-white tables and dirty-white benches. At the food counter at one end of the room we got a plateful each of dishwater-tasting boiled onions, mashed potatoes and beans, three thick slices of bread and a hunk of butter.

We finished dinner, walked back across the tracks to the bunk house. In the back door and up the stairs again: watchman tilted back in his chair under a dim light, reading Western stories. A sleepy guy with a flashlight took our breakfast tickets, then led us downstairs to a big, dirt-floored room, filled with army cots about a foot apart, each one with a sleeping man in it. He assigned us to bunks 77 and 78. Each cot had a straw tick, a straw pillow, one un-ironed sheet folded over, two blankets. We took off our shoes and climbed into bed.

At six in the morning we were awakened by a guy who said in a friendly voice that we'd better get up or we'd miss breakfast. All over the rooms, upstairs and downstairs, weary men rose stiffly, hair matted, eyes swollen and bloodshot from lack of sleep. They grunted and yawned in the early morning darkness.

A thin file of men slouched dejectedly, shoulders hunched, hands in pockets, across the railroad tracks and up Missouri Street to the basement dining-room. We sat at the tables and ate a breakfast of mush, hotcakes and syrup and coffee. A group of Negroes sat on one side of the room against the wall and ate their breakfast off a bench. They weren't allowed to use the tables.

We walked up out of the breakfast room to the ground level above. I felt a tap on my shoulder, turned around, looked down into a young guy's face, contorted with rage. He said:

"Listen, buddy, we're both on the tramp and I don't want you running over me, see!"

I told him I was sorry and he walked away. I had bumped into him so lightly that I did not notice it. On a job or on the street he wouldn't have noticed it either.

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# I Was Marching

## MERIDEL LE SUEUR

*"I have tried to put down exactly the reaction of many artists, writers and middle class to the strike here," writes Miss LeSueur from Minneapolis. "Although they were in great sympathy they did not know how to act, they felt frightened, timid, inferior. I do not exaggerate when I say that at the funeral [of one of the workers killed by the militia in the recent truckmen's strike in Minneapolis] I saw literally hundreds of them who came there, who stood outside (and many stood outside strike headquarters all the time) with all the chaos of old reactions, individualistic, special, etc.*

*"Another thing: although these people intellectually were won over, their old emotional habits made it impossible for them to act, and although every one of them economically realized they belonged to and were fast becoming a part of the working class still they were isolated and emotionally incapable of acting with others.*

*"On the other hand some of them did act but always in an isolated special way.*

*"To enter into any mass movement you have to be born out of everything you have been taught, out of every corpuscle in your body, if you belong to that class. Workers know how to act together, work together. But in the middle class even the family is corrupted, is not a unit, not a social unity any longer. You are angrily isolate in your own family.*

*"I thought at that funeral that some of the middle class suffer from an awful hunger too . . . there they stood unable to march . . . and hungry to be a part of that great struggle too."*

MINNEAPOLIS.

I HAVE never been in a strike before. It is like looking at something that is happening for the first time and there are no thoughts and no words yet accrued to it. If you come from the middle class, words are likely to mean more than an event. You are likely to think about a thing, and the happening will be the size of a pin point and the words around the happening very large, distorting it queerly. It's a case of "Remembrance of things past." When you are in the event, you are likely to have a distinctly individualistic attitude, to be only partly there, and to care more for the happening afterwards than when it is happening. That is why it is hard for a person like myself and others to be in a strike.

Besides, in American life, you hear things happening in a far and muffled way. One thing is said and another happens. Our merchant society has been built upon a huge hypocrisy, a cut-throat competition which sets one man against another and at the same time an ideology mouthing such words as "Humanity," "Truth," the "Golden Rule," and such. Now in a crisis the word falls away and the skeleton of that action shows in terrific movement.

For two days I heard of the strike. I went by their headquarters, I walked by on the opposite side of the street and saw the dark old building that had been a garage and lean, dark young faces leaning from the upstairs windows. I had to go down there often. I looked in. I saw the huge black interior and live coals of living men moving restlessly and orderly, their eyes gleaming from their sweaty faces.

I saw cars leaving filled with grimy men, pickets going to the line, engines roaring out. I stayed close to the door, watching. I didn't go in. I was afraid they would put me out. After all, I could remain a spectator. A man wearing a polo hat kept going around with a large camera taking pictures.

I am putting down exactly how I felt, because I believe others of my class feel the same as I did. I believe it stands for an important psychic change that must take place in all. I saw many artists, writers, professionals, even business men and women standing across the street, too, and I saw in their faces the same longings, the same fears.

The truth is I was afraid. Not of the physical danger at all, but an awful fright of mixing, of losing myself, of being unknown and lost. I felt inferior. I felt no one would know me there, that all I had been trained to excel in would go unnoticed. I can't describe what I felt, but perhaps it will come near it to say that I felt I excelled in competing with others and I knew instantly that these people were *NOT* competing at all, that they were acting in a strange, powerful trance of movement *together*. And I was filled with longing to act with them and with fear that I could not. I felt I was born out of every kind of life, thrown up alone, looking at other lonely people, a condition I had been in the habit of defending with various attitudes of cynicism, preciosity, defiance and hatred.

Looking at that dark and lively building, massed with men, I knew my feelings to be those belonging to disruption, chaos and disintegration and I felt their direct and awful movement, mute and powerful, drawing them into a close and glowing cohesion like a powerful conflagration in the midst of the city. And it filled me with fear and awe and at the same time hope. I knew this action to be prophetic and indicative of future actions and I wanted to be part of it.

Our life seems to be marked with a curious and muffled violence over America, but this action has always been in the dark, men and women dying obscurely, poor and poverty marked lives, but now from city to city runs this violence, into the open, and colossal happening stand bare before our eyes, the street churning suddenly upon the pivot of mad violence, whole men suddenly spouting blood and running like living sieves, another holding a dangling arm shot squarely off, a tall youngster, running, tripping over his intestines, and one block away, in the burning sun, gay women shopping and a window dresser trying to decide whether to put green or red voile on a mannikin.

In these terrible happenings you cannot be neutral now. No one can be neutral in the face of bullets.

The next day, with sweat breaking out on my body, I walked past the three guards at the door. They said, "Let the women in. We need women." And I knew it was no joke.

II

At first I could not see into the dark building. I felt many men coming and going, cars driving through. I had an awful impulse to go into the office which I passed, and offer to do some special work. I saw a sign which said "Get your button." I saw they all had buttons with the date and the number of the union local. I didn't get a button. I wanted to be anonymous.

There seemed to be a current, running down the wooden stairs, towards the front of the building, into the street, that was massed with people, and back again. I followed the current up the old stairs packed closely with hot men and women. As I was going up I could look down and see the lower floor, the cars drawing up to await picket call, the hospital roped off on one side.

Upstairs men sat bolt upright in chairs asleep, their bodies flung in attitudes of peculiar violence of fatigue. A woman nursed her baby. Two young girls slept together on a cot, dressed in overalls. The voice of the loudspeaker filled the room. The immense heat pressed down from the flat ceiling. I stood up against the wall for an hour. No one paid any attention to me. The commissary was in back and the women came out sometimes and sat down, fanning themselves with their aprons and listening to the news over the loudspeaker. A huge man seemed hung on a tiny folding chair. Occasionally some one tiptoed over and brushed the flies off his face. His great head fell over and the sweat poured regularly from his forehead like a spring. I wondered why they took such care of him. They all looked at him tenderly as he slept. I learned later he was a leader on the picket line and had the scalps of more cops to his name than any other.

Three windows flanked the front. I walked over to the windows. A red-headed woman with a button saying, "Unemployed Council," was looking out. I looked out with her. A thick crowd stood in the heat below listening to the strike bulletin. We could look right into the windows of the smart club across the street. We could see people peering out of the windows half hidden.

I kept feeling they would put me out. No

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one paid any attention. The woman said without looking at me, nodding to the palatial house, "It sure is good to see the enemy plain like that." "Yes," I said. I saw that the club was surrounded by a steel picket fence higher than a man. "They know what they put that there fence there for," she said. "Yes," I said. "Well," she said, "I've got to get back to the kitchen. Is it ever hot?" The thermometer said ninety-nine. The sweat ran off us, burning our skins. "The boys'll be coming in," she said, "for their noon feed." She had a scarred face. "Boy, will it be a madhouse?" "Do you need any help?" I said eagerly. "Boy," she said, "some of us have been pouring coffee since two o'clock this morning, steady, without no let-up." She started to go. She didn't pay any special attention to me as an individual. She didn't seem to be thinking of me, she didn't seem to see me. I watched her go. I felt rebuffed, hurt. Then I saw instantly she didn't see me because she saw only what she was doing. I ran after her.

III

I found the kitchen organized like a factory. Nobody asks my name. I am given a large butcher's apron. I realize I have never before worked anonymously. At first I feel strange and then I feel good. The forewoman sets me to washing tin cups. There are not enough cups. We have to wash fast and rinse them and set them up quickly for buttermilk and coffee as the line thickens and the men wait. A little shortish man who is a professional dishwasher is supervising. I feel I won't be able to wash tin cups, but when no one pays any attention except to see that there are enough cups I feel better.

The line grows heavy. The men are coming in from the picket line. Each woman has one thing to do. There is no confusion. I soon learn I am not supposed to help pour the buttermilk. I am not supposed to serve sandwiches. I am supposed to wash tin cups. I suddenly look around and realize all these women are from factories. I know they have learned this organization and specialization in the factory. I look at the round shoulders of the woman cutting bread next to me and I feel I know her. The cups are brought back, washed and put on the counter again. The sweat pours down our faces, but you forget about it.

Then I am changed and put to pouring coffee. At first I look at the men's faces and then I don't look any more. It seems I am pouring coffee for the same tense, dirty sweating face, the same body, the same blue shirt and overalls. Hours go by, the heat is terrific. I am not tired. I am not hot. I am pouring coffee. I am swung into the most intense and natural organization I have ever felt. I know everything that is going on. These things become of great matter to me.

Eyes looking, hands raising a thousand cups, throats burning, eyes bloodshot from lack of sleep, the body dilated to catch every sound over the whole city. Buttermilk? Coffee? "Is your man here?" the woman cutting sandwiches asks me.

"No," I say, then I lie for some reason, peering around as if looking eagerly for someone, "I don't see him now."

But I was pouring coffee for living men.

IV

For a long time, about one o'clock, it seemed like something was about to happen. Women seemed to be pouring into headquarters to be near their men. You could hear only lies over the radio. And lies in the paper. Nobody knew precisely what was happening, but everyone thought something would happen in a few hours. You could feel the men being poured out of the hall onto the picket line. Every few minutes cars left and more drew up and were filled. The voice at the loudspeaker was accelerated, calling for men, calling for picket cars.

I could hear the men talking about the arbitration board, the truce that was supposed to be maintained while the board sat with the Governor. They listened to every word over the loudspeaker. A terrible communal excitement ran through the hall like a fire through a forest. I could hardly breathe. I seemed to have no body at all except the body of this excitement. I felt that what had happened before had not been a real movement, these false words and actions had taken place on the periphery. The real action was about to show, the real intention.

We kept on pouring thousands of cups of coffee, feeding thousands of men.

The chef with a woman tattooed on his arm was just dishing the last of the stew. It was about two o'clock. The commissary was about empty. We went into the front hall. It was drained of men. The chairs were empty. The voice of the announcer was excited. "The men are massed at the market," he said. "Something is going to happen." I sat down beside a woman who was holding her hands tightly together, leaning forward listening, her eyes bright and dilated. I had never seen her before. She took my hands. She pulled me towards her. She was crying. "It's awful," she said. "Something awful is going to happen. They've taken both my children away from me and now something is going to happen to all those men." I held her hands. She had a green ribbon around her hair.

The action seemed reversed. The cars were coming back. The announcer cried, "This is murder." Cars were coming in. I don't know how we got to the stairs. Everyone seemed to be converging at a menaced point. I saw below the crowd stirring, uncoiling. I saw them taking men out of cars and putting them on the hospital cots, on the floor. At first I felt frightened, the close black area of the barn, the blood, the heavy movement, the sense of myself lost, gone. But I couldn't have turned away now. A woman clung to my hand. I was pressed against the body of another. If you are to understand anything you must understand it in the muscular event, in actions we have not been trained for. Something broke all my surfaces in something that was beyond horror and I was dabbing alcohol on the gaping wounds that buckshot makes, hanging open like crying mouths. Buckshot wounds splay in the body and then swell like a blow. Ness, who died, had thirty-eight slugs in his body, in the chest and in the back.

The picket cars keep coming in. Some men have walked back from the market, holding their own blood in. They move in a great explosion, and the newness of the movement makes it seem like something under ether, moving terrifically towards a culmination.

From all over the city workers are coming. They gather outside in two great half-circles, cut in two to let the ambulances in. A traffic cop is still directing traffic at the corner and the crowd cannot stand to see him. "We'll give you just two seconds to beat it," they tell him. He goes away quickly. A striker takes over the street.

Men, women and children are massing outside, a living circle close packed for protection. From the tall office building business men are looking down on that black swarm thickening, coagulating into what action they cannot tell.

We have living blood on our skirts.

V

That night at eight o'clock a mass-meeting was called of all labor. It was to be in a parking lot two blocks from headquarters. All the women gather at the front of the building with collection cans, ready to march to the meeting. I have not been home. It never occurs to me to leave. The twilight is eerie and the men are saying that the chief of police is going to attack the meeting and raid headquarters. The smell of blood hangs in the hot, still air. Rumors strike at the taut nerves. The dusk looks ghastly with what might be in the next half hour.

"If you have any children," a woman said to me, "you better not go." I looked at the desperate women's faces, the broken feet, the torn and hanging pelvis, the worn and lovely bodies of women who persist under such desperate labors. I shivered, though it was 96 and the sun had been down a good hour.

The parking lot was already full of people when we got there and men swarmed the adjoining roofs. An elegant café stood across the street with water sprinkling from its roof and splendidly dressed men and women stood on the steps as if looking at a show.

The platform was the bullet riddled truck of the afternoon's fray. We had been told to stand close to this platform, so we did, making the center of a wide massed circle that stretched as far as we could see. We seemed buried like minerals in a mass, packed body to body. I felt again that peculiar heavy silence in which there is the real form of the happening. My eyes burn. I can hardly see. I seem to be standing like an animal in ambush. I have the brightest, most physical feeling with every sense sharpened peculiarly.

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The movements, the masses that I see and feel I have never known before. I only partly know what I am seeing, feeling, but I feel it is the real body and gesture of a future vitality. I see that there is a bright clot of women drawn close to a bullet riddled truck. I am one of them, yet I don't feel myself at all. It is curious, I feel most alive and yet for the first time in my life I do not feel myself as separate. I realize then that all my previous feelings have been based on feeling myself separate and distinct from others and now I sense sharply faces, bodies, closeness and my own fear is not my own alone, nor my hope.

The strikers keep moving up cars. We keep moving back together to let cars pass and form between us and a brick building that flanks the parking lot. They are connecting the loudspeaker, testing it. Yes, they are moving up lots of cars, through the crowd and lining them closely side by side. There must be ten thousand people now, heat rising from them. They are standing silent, watching the platform, watching the cars being brought up. The silence seems terrific like a great form moving of itself. This is real movement issuing from the close reality of mass feeling. This is the first real rhythmic movement I have ever seen. My heart hammers terrifically. My hands are swollen and hot. No one is producing this movement. It is a movement upon which all are moving softly, rhythmically, terribly.

No matter how many times I looked at what was happening I hardly knew what I saw. I looked and I saw time and time again that there were men standing close to us, around us, and then suddenly I knew that there was a living chain of men standing shoulder to shoulder, forming a circle around the group of women. They stood shoulder to shoulder slightly moving like a thick vine from the pressure behind, but standing tightly woven like a living wall, moving gently.

I saw that the cars were now lined one close fitted to the other with strikers sitting on the roofs and closely packed on the running boards. They could see far over the crowd. "What are they doing that for?" I said. No one answered. The wide dilated eyes of the women were like my own. No one seemed to be answering questions now. They simply spoke, cried out, moved together now.

The last car drove in slowly, the crowd letting them through without command or instruction. "A little closer," someone said. "Be sure they are close." Men sprang up to direct whatever action was needed and then subsided again and no one had noticed who it was. They stepped forward to direct a needed action and then fell anonymously back again.

We all watched carefully the placing of the cars. Sometimes we looked at each other. I didn't understand that look. I felt uneasy. It was as if something escaped me. And then suddenly, on my very body, I knew what they were doing, as if it had been communicated to me from a thousand eyes, a thousand silent throats, as if it had been shouted in the loudest voice.

THEY WERE BUILDING A BARRICADE.

## VI

Two men died from that day's shooting. Men lined up to give one of them a blood transfusion, but he died. Black Friday men called the murderous day. Night and day workers held their children up to see the body of Ness who died. Tuesday, the day of the funeral, one thousand more militia were massed downtown.

It was still over ninety in the shade. I went to the funeral parlors and thousands of men and women were massed there waiting in the terrific sun. One block of women and children were standing two hours waiting. I went over and stood near them. I didn't know whether I could march. I didn't like marching in parades. Besides, I felt they might not want me.

I stood aside not knowing if I would march. I couldn't see how they would ever organize it anyway. No one seemed to be doing much.

At three-forty some command went down the ranks. I said foolishly at the last minute, "I don't belong to the auxiliary — could I march?" Three women drew me in. "We want all to march," they said gently. "Come with us."

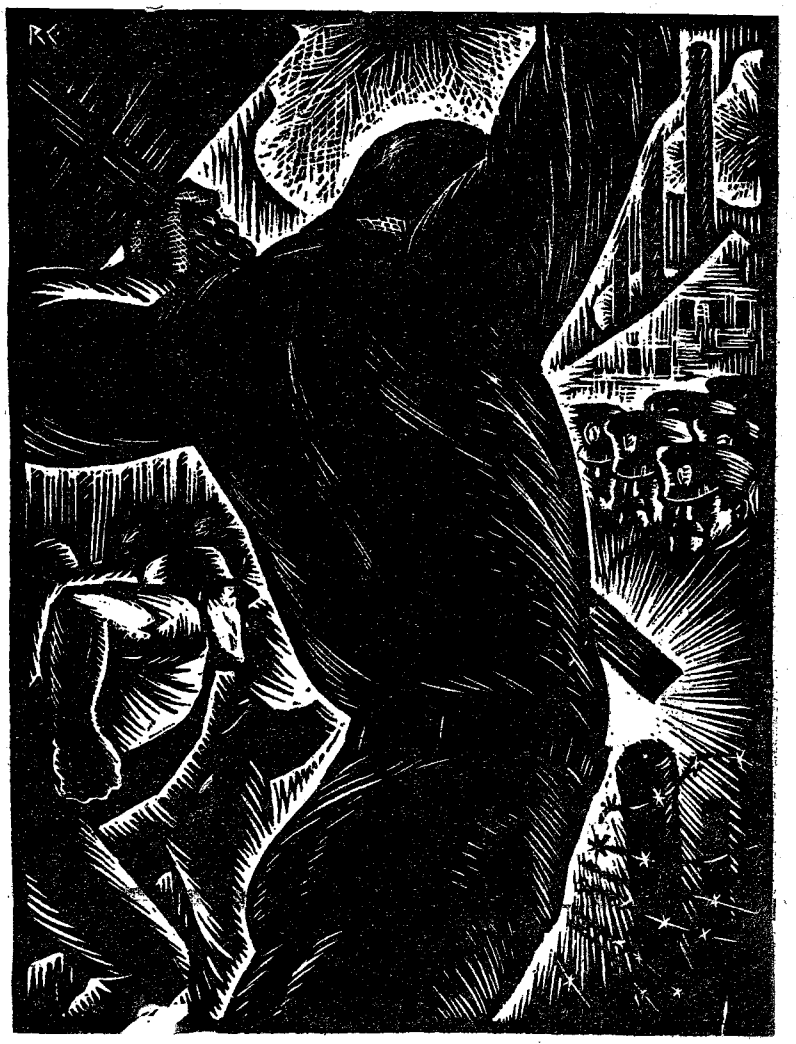
The giant mass uncoiled like a serpent and straightened out ahead and to my amazement on a lift of road I could see six blocks of massed men, four abreast, with bare heads, moving straight on and as they moved, uncoiled the mass behind and pulled it after them. I felt myself walking, accelerating my speed with the others as the line stretched, pulled taut, then held its rhythm.

Not a cop was in sight. The cortege moved through the stop-and-go signs, it seemed to lift of its own dramatic rhythm, coming from the intention of every person there. We were moving spontaneously in a movement, natural, hardy and miraculous.

We passed through six blocks of tenements, through a sea of grim faces and there was not a sound. There was the curious shuffle of thousands of feet, without drum or bugle, in ominous silence, a march not heavy as the military, but very light, exactly with the heart beat.

I was marching with a million hands, movements, faces and my own movement was repeating again and again, making a new movement from these many gestures, the walking, falling back, the open mouth crying, the nostrils stretched apart, the raised hand, the blow falling, and the outstretched hand drawing me in.

I felt my legs straighten. I felt my feet join in that strange shuffle of thousands of bodies moving with direction, of thousands of feet and my own breath with the gigantic breath. As if an electric charge had passed through me, my hair stood on end. I was marching.



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# The Slithy Electrons

DAVID RAMSEY

THERE was a time when scientists met to discuss discoveries which pointed the way to a more exact picture of the universe. On the banner of science was inscribed the proud motto that for man there were no insoluble problems. "What is not, may be!" scientists asserted.

Today, however, a meeting of scientists does not primarily take up the advances of science, or our more accurate knowledge of nature. That is old-fashioned and materialistic. The new "science" must provide sermon material for pastors who will proclaim to their congregations that science and religion have been "reconciled all over again."

Back of this retreat from reason and logic to mysticism and irrationality is the general crisis of capitalism which produced in turn a crisis in bourgeois thought. The material basis of scientific advance was an expanding capitalism. With the decay of the capital system, the foundation of further scientific progress was undermined. Every accentuation of the general crisis of capitalism brings on a more severe crisis in scientific work.

Scientists find themselves in an impossible position. The alternatives that confront them under capitalism are unemployment or the degradation of jobbing for unreason, death and profits. In the face of a world gone mad, they retreat to the seclusion of mysticism. Their despair with the world is heightened by the breakdown of the traditional foundations of science and by their inability to "fit" the revolutionary developments of contemporary science into traditional categories. The insufficiency of the older philosophies of science and the need for a thorough philosophic restatement have not led most scientists to attempt to cut their way through confusion and paradox to a new synthesis. Consciously in a few cases, and unconsciously in most, they are aware that to strike out on new paths means to cross a bridge that leads to a revolutionary conception of reality that dovetails only with a revolutionary conception of society.

Thus scientists today are groping for a solution that will end the growing disorganization and retardation of scientific research. They realize the need for a synthesis of conflicting theories. But they have come up against the necessity for capitalism to stifle the growth of science which has become incompatible with its existence. To attack capitalism is, then, the only way out. Caught in this dilemma, they prefer to flounder around in the bogs of mysticism and irrationality to boldly attacking capitalism and attempting a new scientific synthesis on the basis of a consistent materialism.

This is by way of introducing the presidential address of Sir James H. Jeans, the noted mathematical physicist, to the current meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. Sir James has made some important contributions to science. In discussions of technical problems he used a clarity of approach that was his most distinguishing characteristic. His fine intellect, however, went to pieces as he introduced mysticism into his work.

His present incantations to Jabberwocky are not a sudden development. Five years ago he closed his monumental treatise on *Astronomy and Cosmogeny* with the startling statement that "we are brain-cells in the mind of God." Sir James revived the old anthropomorphic dogma which asserts that the world was created and is controlled by some wise shepherd, or skilful mechanic—depending upon the development of the period. To bring his picture of God—whom Haeckel once mockingly dubbed a "gaseous vertebrate" — within the confines of his own field of interest, Sir James made God a mathematician.

It is, of course, impossible to take Sir James' mathematical God very seriously. Since he is invisible, he cannot manifest himself to us, nor can we make any observations of his presence. Consequently, as a nineteenth century scientist once ironically put it, he can affect us and the universe only by his weight.

When Sir James made us the brain-cells of God, he had only reached the point of "doubting" whether the universe or matter existed. After five years of pondering over the problem as to whether reality is mental, he has finally come to the conclusion that mind is the only reality and that there is no objective physical universe.

A reading of Sir James' address finds one plunging into the gloom of an atmosphere where "the slithy toves . . . gyre and gimble in the wabe" and where the Snark flits in and out of the probability states of electrons. Even Sir Oliver Lodge's idea that our universe is imbedded in a "spiritual fourth dimension," and that the world is part of the "garment of God" makes more sense. Sir Oliver at least uses the familiar framework of science. He merely substitutes God for scientific law which is rubbish enough. But Sir James gives you the creeps since he speaks in terms of pure nonsense with overtones of spooky invocations to a God whom he no longer describes as a mathematician. He has become an Undulation.

One has to feel the mood of Sir James' litany. There is no way of getting hold of anything that is tangible—with one exception which will be discussed later. Matter, space and time, the universe, are all products of our minds according to Sir James. Scientists were once taught to think that they were "studying an objective Nature which had its own existence independently of the mind which perceived it." That idea, Sir James claims is wrong. "Nature consists of the general quality of waves of knowledge, or of the absence of knowledge, in our minds." Electrons, for example, are figments of the imagination (one wonders how that doughty old Chautauqua-howler, Millikan, will take this, considering how accurately he measured the charge on the electron). The universe is not something crude and material; it dissolves into "a stormy sea with the sea taken away and with only the abstract quality of a storminess left—or the grin of the Cheshire cat, if we can think of a grin as undulating." Scientific law gives way to a "malign fate" which in the new physics is "even more powerful and more all-pervading than ever before."

In sounding the death-knell of any rational and verifiable explanation of natural phenomena, Sir James was troubled by one difficulty. How can different scientists see the same moon, sun and stars, if they carry them around in their respective minds. After all, it would be pretty awkward for De Sitter, say, to have to carry an exploding universe around in his head. And even Sir James, although aware of the great and far-seen Purpose of everything, must have quailed at the difficulty of making himself understood to his audience if their "minds can only be acquainted with things inside themselves — never with things outside."

Since there was no sense in traveling to Aberdeen for the purpose of talking to himself, Sir James invented a method of penetrating "that mysterious world outside ourselves to which our minds can never penetrate." God becomes our means of contact with the external world. Sir James actually makes of God a kind of anthropomorphic theory of knowledge and cosmic radio rolled into one. Just as objects are merely our mental constructions, so are our perceiving minds part of a Larger Perception—"the ingredients of a continuous stream of life." That is, each of us is an indistinct part of the universal God-stream.

With a delicacy akin to that of an orthodox Jew, Sir James never mentions the dreaded name of God. He refers to the old gentleman as "the problem which has commended itself to many philosophers." How his God-theory of knowledge and perception operates, Sir James, of course, never makes clear. He merely speaks of physics as providing "a possible although very conjectural clue" which might be a step toward the solution of that greater problem which lies at the basis of religion.

Why does Sir James put forward the absurd opinion that the world exists only in his mind, a concept held only by lunatics and idealist philosophers? Why were his gro-

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tesque and unintelligible statements hailed as the "most brilliant" that the Association had heard in many years? The answer to these questions is that Sir James is attempting to take false advantage of the ferment of ideas brought on by the revolution in the concepts of modern physics. Instead of utilizing the new discoveries as a more exact approach to objective reality, he, like the other idealistic scientists, uses the present conflict of theories to attack the materialist view of the independent existence of the universe and the objective reality of matter. He tries to hoodwink us with fluff and chincanery, although the facts of science prove the indisputable validity of these bases of science.

Now once you have denied the objectivity of the external world, and regard the physical universe as a product of mind or spirit, then you end up as Sir James does by making everything a product of some Absolute—whether you call it Idea, Will or God. And once you make God your center of the universe, you conclude by using your process of God-building as a cloak to cover the corruption and stench of dying capitalism. The mechanics of this ideological process are not as important as the end product—the open defense and justification of the present order.

One of the effects of the idealist's efforts to reduce science to unintelligibility has been that the bourgeoisie have lost confidence in scientific endeavor. If science bows down to religion, all the more reason to divert money from research to the altar. There is no more profit in discovery and invention. But a lot of surplus value can be extracted from workers narcotized with ritual and symbol. So Sir James, figuratively speaking, has helped to boot himself out of a job.

The scientist has gone through the elaborate hocus-pocus of discrediting science only to find that this was then used to close down his own laboratory. Naturally, Sir James raises a howl. He attacks the idea that science should take a holiday. As the spokesman for all scientists who are worried about their jobs, he points out that if science is throttled, prosperity will not return.

Sir James admits that science can be charged in small part with causing the crisis, but nevertheless he contends that the solution lies in the vigorous pursuit of research which ultimately will lead to gigantic new industries. He becomes a Spenglerian in his conclusion where he speaks of the virtues of "a glorious failure" resulting from pressing onward, rather than accepting "inglorious failure" by calling a moratorium on discovery.

Sir James does not see that in the period of capitalist decline there are no prospects of inventions that would lead to the emergence of new industries and a new period of prosperity. Most of the potential technical changes come into conflict with vested interests and are bought off. What few are put into operation displace an enormous number of workers which further aggravates the course of the present crisis.

The scientists like Jeans and Millikan and Karl Compton who supposedly defend science helped destroy the ideological basis for further advance. Their pleas for subsidies to science will be carried out in practice by endowments to those fields which are useful to the military needs of the ruling class. Being reactionaries of the most hidebound variety, they will hail this limitation of research to methods of efficient killing as necessary to the reorganization of science on a "non-materialistic" foundation. Like the Nazis, they will come to the point of declaring that science must be used only as a military weapon, that its only significance lies in its relationship to War.

Sir James has not yet reached this full-blown stage. That is why he was not as realistic as Sir Josiah Stamp who urged the Association to put a curb on invention and discovery. The latter, a director of the Bank of England, referred contemptuously to his audience as "you scientific pundits." The capitalist is less polite to scientists now that they are no longer so useful an instrument for producing profits. He warned them sharply that they must introduce discoveries only "under conditions that we could control." By we he meant the ruling class.

This control as a matter of fact exists already. Monopoly capital has been sabotaging science for some time. It permits the marketing only of those inventions that can be utilized for military need or the displacement of large numbers of workers.

Sir Josiah Stamp's approach to the problem is false. Needless to say, the crisis is not the product of "chaotic discoveries." Technology was a factor that speeded up the contradictory processes of capitalism. It cannot solve these contradictions, nor will a curb on inventions ease the antagonisms. The flight from technique brings about other contradictions which are equally insoluble, such as unemployment, the decay of the industrial plant, and the breakdown of capitalist society itself.

But Sir Josiah Stamp is more realistic, because he realizes that capitalism must call a halt to scientific advance. In its struggle to survive, the dying order must get rid of every essential to progress as being useless and dangerous.

A series of pseudo-sciences are being constructed by the fascists. No small share of the blame rests upon the Jeans and the Millikans and others of their ilk who by attacking the materialistic foundations of science, pointed the way to the growth of the blackest mysticism, the propagation of chauvinism, and the complete subordination of scientific investigation to war and profits.

# Sunday to Sunday

## KENNETH FEARING

Unknown to Mabel, who works as cook for the rich and snobbish Aldergates,
the insured, by subway suicide, provides for a widow and three sons;
picked from the tracks, scraped from the wheels, identified, this happy ending restores the nation to contact with its heritage: A Hearst cartoon.
Meanwhile it is Infant Welfare Week, milk prices up, child clinics closed, relief curtailed,
the Atlantic and Pacific fleets in full support off Vera Cruz,
in court, sentence suspended, Rose Raphael dispossessed of a Flatbush packingbox,
Jim Aldergate in love with Mabel, but unaware she has been married to Zorrocco the gangster,
An envoy bearing again an after-luncheon wreath to the tomb of the patriot dead,
stocks firmer, meanwhile, on reports of drought,
and Zorrocco, not knowing Mabel loves Jim, has returned to use her for his criminal schemes; but in a motor crash he is killed, Mabel winning at last to happiness in Jim's arms,
as hundreds, thousands, millions search the want ads, search the factories, search the subways, search the streets, search to sleep in missions, jungles, depots, parks, sleep to wake again to gutters, scrapheaps, breadlines, jails—
Unknown to the beautiful, beautiful, beautiful Mabel; unknown to the deathray smile of president or priest; unknown to Zorrocco, Jim, or the unknown soldier; unknown to WGN and the bronze, bronze bells of Sunday noon.

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# The Wobbly in American Literature

ALAN CALMER

DURING its heyday, the Wobbly movement was violently distrustful of intellectuals. But this does not mean that it sneered at all intellectual endeavor. Contrary to most beliefs, the "official" attitude of the I.W.W. toward culture was by no means a negative one. It displayed a high regard for any kind of literary or artistic expression—when such work praised the manual worker, or sniped at anybody hostile to the working-class.

This respect for culture is shown by the four-sheet Wobbly newspapers, which frequently featured verse, embellished with drawings, on the first page. The New Solidarity, for example, ran a stanza on capitalist justice, by M. Robbins Lampson, in the center of its front page during one week in 1919. *The March of the Hungry Men,* a poem by Reginald W. Kaufmann, was featured in the Industrial Worker during the preceding year.

According to John Reed, the Wobbly movement created intellectual groups throughout the western section of the country. "Wherever there is an I.W.W. located," he wrote, "you will find an intellectual center—a place where men read philosophy, economics, the latest plays, novels; where art and poetry are discussed and international politics." They were also interested in the theatre: "And there are playwrights in the I.W.W. who write about life in the jungles and the Wobblies produce the plays for audiences of Wobblies." In *Rambling Kid,* a novel of the I.W.W., Charles Ashleigh tells of heated discussions in Midwestern saloons "as to whether Sinclair and Dreiser were revolutionary writers."

As a matter of fact, the I.W.W. *glorified* any writings that dealt with the workers—no matter how mediocre such efforts were. If we can speak of a Wobbly aesthetic, it might almost be summarized in these terms: on the one hand it eulogized writings of the type we have mentioned; on the other, it sneered at all other forms of literature. This primitive approach to culture resulted in exaggerated praise of mere doggerel and jingles and tendentious compositions of the most blatant character — entirely because they expounded the point of view of the militant labor movement.

However immature this method of evaluation was, its bias is quite understandable. It was simply a spontaneous expression of the pride which the workers felt for the incipient literature of their own class. Certainly the panegyrics of the rising bourgeoisie for their own didactic dramas were not less extravagant.

It is true that this vulgarized attitude—the confusion of aesthetic with ethical categories, as well as the lack of understanding of the problem of the heritage of past culture—hampered the development of working-class literature. But its low level was due even more to the absence of first-rate poets in the Wobbly movement. Its rhymesters were of a distinctly minor character. No major literary figure in this country had as yet identified himself with the working-class.

Nevertheless, the poems and songs of the I.W.W. marked an advance in American labor literature, when compared with the verse of the obscure worker-poets and poetasters of labor in the nineteenth century.

The development of social conditions in the United States was just beginning to turn a few minor poets into the organized working-class. In addition, a talented songbird arose out of the American labor movement for the first time in our history. Despite its youth and ignorance, American labor literature, as expressed in the I.W.W., made a few blundering steps forward.

Poetry to the Wobblies was usually conceived as a tool for direct action, as a naked "weapon" in the most obvious sense of the word. During 1917 the Industrial Worker carried a news item dealing with a prison episode in Moscow, Idaho, which illustrates the way the Wobblies used their verse. The story was captioned, *Songs Get Sheriff's Goat,* and read: "Since Saturday we have received no papers. The fellow-workers made up a parody on T. P. Jones, the potlatch scabherder, to the tune of Casey Jones. One Wobbly sent out a copy in a letter which the sheriff read. We have been kicking about not receiving our papers, and finally the sheriff told us that if we will stop writing such songs he will let us have the papers again." For them, the motto of V. D. Scudder, "Great literature is always the record of some great struggle"—which they quoted in their newspapers—was interpreted in the most literal fashion, as a rigid formula. Here is another example of a minor, but no less direct manner in which they employed verse—this time to raise funds for the defense of Bill Haywood:

> Remember our Joe Hill,
> And brave Frank Little, too;
> If you would save the boys and Bill—
> PUT YOUR DONATIONS THROUGH!

The Wobblies used the breezy lyrics of Joe Hill and other I.W.W. songsters in every strike and free speech fight. In his play, *Singing Jailbirds,* Upton Sinclair has tried, with some small success, to capture the spirit in which they enlisted their songbooks in the class struggle.

Not only did they use their old songs to drum up the courage of the workers on the picket line. Every new conflict evoked some form of poetic response. The battles of the I. W. W. furnished the inspiration for new songs, which were immediately put into service. An early example is Joe Hill's satire on a labor misleader in the Lawrence strike of 1912—sung to the tune of *A Little Talk with Jesus.* Some of the last instances of this sort are found in the prison songs and poems written in the post-war period, when Wobblies edited "shop" papers from their cells in Fort Leavenworth, under such titles as Wire-City Weekly and the Can-Opener.

The best of the rather stilted verse of the Wobbly poets dealt with their heroes who were killed in battle. The martyrs of the free speech fight at Everett, Washington, were memorialized by one of the Wobbly prison poets. Taking his theme from the report of a witness—"And then the fellow worker died, singing *Hold the Fort. . . .*"—Charles Ashleigh wrote:

> Yet, the mad chorus from that devil's host,—
> Yea, all the tumult of that butcher throng,—
> Compound of bullets, booze and coward boast,—
> Could not out-shriek one dying workers' song!

Some of these poems were defiant challenges hurled at the ruling class. Arturo Giovannitti's long recitation, *When the Cock Crows,* written in "memory of Frank Little, hanged at midnight" in Montana during 1917, warns:

> . . . someone will bear witness to this to the dawn. Someone will stand straight and fearless tomorrow between the armed hosts of your slaves, and shout to them the challenge of that silence you could not break.

Ralph Chaplin's sonnet to Wesley Everest, murdered at Centralia two years later, is softer, but in the same mood. So is his elegy to Joe Hill.

Hill was the successor to the miner-bards of the Molly Maguire period in American labor history who improvised songs to cheer the workers in the midst of their strikes. Like them, he was a genuine worker-poet, who wrote always as a worker rather than as a writer. From the day he landed in New York, a Swedish immigrant, he spent his time in the harvest fields, construction camps, machine shops, and mines—or in the jungles and Wobbly locals. "I have always worked hard for a living," he said just before he was murdered, "and my spare time I spent by painting pictures, writing songs, and composing music." One of his first compositions, written in the midst of a railroad strike, is a little masterpiece of narrative labor poetry. Its story of how Casey Jones went to heaven after scabbing on the "S.P. Line" only to be re-routed to hell for scabbing on the angels, illustrates Joe Hill's lively imaginative gifts, which were revered by Wobblies of every type.

In addition to his narrative songs, which include the well-known "Tramp, tramp, tramp, keep on a-tramping, Nothing doing here for you," Hill will be remembered for his marching, lilting songs like "Should I ever

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be a soldier, 'Neath the red flag I would fight" and "There is power, there is power, in a band of workingmen," which were sung throughout the world.

Like Old Quiz—an Irish poet who died of starvation in New Orleans during the eighteen-seventies—Hill was a literary martyr of the American proletariat. When he was framed and put up against a wall in the Salt Lake pen to face a firing squad, he died "game." "The cause I stand for means more than any human life—much more than mine," were his last words. "Let 'er go!" And to Bill Haywood he wrote just before his execution: "Don't waste any time in mourning. Organize." His will, composed in verse form, was carried out to the letter. "I have met men carrying next their hearts, in the pockets of their working clothes," wrote Jack Reed years later, "little bottles with some of Joe Hill's ashes in them."

Joe Hill was in the thick of the Wobbly struggles to the very end. It is significant to point out that both Ralph Chaplin and Arturo Giovannitti, the ablest of the minor poets around the I.W.W., stopped writing when they withdrew from the forefront of the labor conflict. Their well of inspiration apparently ran dry once they lost contact with the revolutionary labor vanguard. Ralph Chaplin's early verse, printed in the labor press under the signature of "A Paint Creek Miner," is more fiery if less polished than his later efforts. His first work, collected in *When the Leaves Come Out,* is full of defiance thrown at the enemy class. In one early poem he addresses his comrades with proletarian cocksureness:

> They laid their crafty traps for us to trip and stumble in,
> But when we stick together, hell! How can we help but win?

*Bars and Shadows,* which contains the poems Chaplin write during his long imprisonment in Cook County jail and Leavenworth, includes the famous *Mourn Not the Dead*:

> But rather mourn the apathetic throng—
> The cowed and the meek—
> Who see the world's great anguish and its wrong
> And dare not speak!

However, most of the verse in this volume is cluttered with an outmoded imagery and a pliant mood that are rarely suited to revolutionary subject-matter.

Giovannitti's first contact with the Wobbly movement was made in the Lawrence strike of 1912, where he learned to write his revolutionary anthems. One of his first poems was written while he sat on the prisoners bench with Joseph Ettor:

> And now we, too, must sit here, Joe. Don't dust
> These boards on which our wretched brothers fell,
> They are clean, there is no reason for disgust,
> For the fat millionaire's revolting stench
> Isn't here, nor the preacher's saintly smell,
> And the judge never sat upon this bench.

His unrhymed recitations like *The Senate of the Dead,* on Karl Liebknecht, written in 1918, scarcely belong to social poetry, although they showed signs of poetic talent. But apparently even these efforts ceased when Giovannitti became identified with a reactionary section of the labor movement.

One of the rhyming contributors to the Wobbly papers who deserves mention is Covington Hall. His poems, collected in the volume, *Songs of Rebellion* (New Orleans, 1913), consist largely of moralistic comments on the mass martyrs of humanity. Some of them, like *God Said*, emulate the Casey-Jones type of Joe Hill song:

> If you want the land, go take it!
> I am wearied of your need:
> I have filled the earth with plenty:
> Have your brains all run to seed?

The Wobbly was represented not only in his own literature, but also in occasional writings by liberal men of letters of the time. The scene in O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* which describes an episode in a Wobbly headquarters was presented rather realistically. William E. Leonard's poem, *The Heretics,* displayed genuine sympathy for certain victims of the red raids.

In sharp contrast are the popular novels which dealt with the Wobblies. Zane Grey's *Desert of Wheat* and Robert W. Chambers' *The Crimson Tide,* both written during the Palmer raids, are full of vile defamations and scurrilous attacks. In the latter, the plot is completely forgotten for entire pages while the author raves at the militant sections of the American proletariat. *Beyond the Desert,* a novelette by Alfred Noyes, written at the same time, is a more subtle attack; it is the story of a former Wobbly leader who sees the light in time to stop a great strike planned by the I.W.W.

It may truthfully be said that the Wobbly found no permanent corner for himself in American literature until after the I.W.W. had disintegrated, in post-bellum days. With the dispersing of the Wobbly movement, its literary school followed the same course. When class issues grew sharper after the Russian Revolution, some Wobbly authors turned reactionary; many retired from the revolution; the most courageous continued ahead. The revolutionary heritage of the Wobblies in American literature, as in economic struggle, passed on to the Communists. Young writers who were first attracted to labor literature by the I.W.W.—Keene Wallis, in his *Bughouse Square* and earlier poems, and Louis Colman in his novel, *Lumber* — joined the Communist literary movement. Only in recent years, with the rise of revolutionary literature, has the heroic fight of Wesley Everest been commemorated in an enduring form, in one of Dos Passos' prose etchings; or a Wobbly character added to American fiction, in *Forty-second Parallel.*

More recently, Josephine Herbst has taken a note which Bill Haywood voiced long ago —"Joe Hill is dead, but his songs live to greet the Red Dawn"—and woven it into one of the best revolutionary short stories, *You Can Live Forever.* The same theme is the subject of a poem by Alfred Hayes, one of the younger poets who has developed inside the Communist movement. Adept at handling many moods, this young Communist poet salutes his predecessor in his own idiom, *I Dreamed I Saw Joe Hill Again:*

> And standing there as big as life,
> And smiling with his eyes,
> Joe says, "What they forgot to kill
> Went on to organize."
>
> "Joe Hill ain't dead," he says to me,
> "Joe Hill ain't never died,
> Where workingmen are out on strike,
> Joe Hill is at their side."
>
> "From San Diego up to Maine,
> In every mine and mill,
> Where workers fight and organize,"
> Says he, "You'll find Joe Hill."

The Wobbly literary movement was buried long ago. Its revolutionary heritage has passed on to the Communist men of letters.

# The Chimera

**EDWIN SEAVER**

AT THAT TIME I was only just a kid, I couldn't have been more than six or seven at the most, so it didn't mean anything particular to me when one day my father came home from work in the middle of the afternoon instead of at supper time the way he always did. It felt kind of queer, that was all, as if it was suddenly Saturday, only it wasn't Saturday it was just an ordinary week day, and somehow it seemed awfully quiet around the house as if there was going to be trouble. I could tell there was going to be trouble the way my father kept lifting his eyebrows without saying a word and staring straight ahead of him while he gulped down the hot lunch my mother had cooked in such a hurry; that was always a sign he was good and angry, and for some reason it even made me angry, too, watching my mother scouring the sink all over again, as if anybody couldn't see it was already plenty clean enough as it was. And as I sat on the edge of a chair by the table, fingering the cold bright sharp tools my father had brought home with him wrapped in an old newspaper, all at once I felt oppressed, and lonely, and acutely unhappy, and I went softly by myself from the kitchen.

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As I lay down on my belly on the rug in the next room to play again with the picture cards I had been arranging in patterns when my father had come home so unexpectedly, I could hear my mother saying: "Alright! So there's no work. So you won't work for a couple of days. That's not so terrible, is it?"

"Humph!" snorted my father. "And suppose it's not just a couple of weeks, months even? She knows it'll be only for a couple of days!"

Why does he say she when he means Mama? I said to myself resentfully, wrangling blindly with my childish incomprehension.

I could not understand. I could only feel that something was wrong and that it had come into the house with my father.

That evening after supper my father took a folded sheet of paper from the inside pocket of his coat and after smoothing it out carefully on the table shoved it across to my big brother Joe.

"Here Joe," he said, "before you go 'way I want you to fill this out for me."

I know now that the paper must have been some sort of application blank, but I never did know what it was for. Maybe it had something to do with insurance, or a loan, or maybe it was from the union (my father was a bookbinder, a member of the I.B.O.B.)—anyway, it doesn't matter. The thing is that although he could read English well enough and indeed did read just about everything he could lay his hands on, my father always felt self-conscious when it came to writing in his adopted language and invariably called upon one of my brothers or sisters to help him out.

Joe had already got up from his chair. "Aw Pa," he said fingering the paper, "it can wait, can't it? I got a date."

My father didn't say anything. He just threw back his head and laughed without making a sound. It was an uncomfortable kind of laugh and I guess it must have made my brother pretty uncomfortable, too, for without saying another word he sat down again and looked at the paper with a scowl settling between his eyes.

"Alright," he said shrugging his shoulders as he took out his fountain pen and unscrewed the cap. "Here goes. Name . . ." The pen glided smoothly and swiftly across the paper. "Address . . . Occupation . . . Married . . . Children . . . Age . . ."

The pen faltered uncertainly, then came to a full stop.

"What age shall I put?" Joe said, just the suggestion of a grin narrowing his eyes as he glanced across the table at my sister.

I could see the flush mounting to my father's forehead as he chewed the corner of his moustache where tobacco had stained the stiff brown hairs the color of amber.

"Put forty-two," he said sharply.

"Forty-two!" exclaimed Joe looking incredulous. "Why, I've been writing you're forty-two for the last five years. Holy mackerel, Pa! don't you ever get any older?"

My sister burst out laughing, a high shrill hysterical laugh that made my blood curdle.

"Sure, didn't you know Papa's discovered the fountain of youth?" she crowed. "That's a good one. . . ." and stopped abruptly, her mouth still open as her eyes met my father's cloudy with wrath.

For a moment there was silence and while I waited tensely for the explosion I could hear the clock ticking loudly in the next room and the kids outside on the street getting up a game of red rover.

But there wasn't any explosion after all. My father only swallowed hard and indicating my sister with a contemptuous lift of his chin in her direction he said: "She laughs!" a queer hurt nervous smile hiding under his moustache. That was all he said: "She laughs!"

And suddenly he looked extraordinarily tired, and sad, and watching his gnarled and twisted fingers crushing a bread crumb upon the tablecloth all at once I wanted to take his hand in mine and hold it against my cheek.

"Put forty-two," he repeated dully, turning to my brother again who was sitting with his eyes lowered as if he felt ashamed. And then with a kind of restrained and patient bitterness he added quietly: "God willing, you won't have to be a laborer like your father, but maybe some day you'll understand that when a workingman says he's fifty that means he's done for."

And with that he got up from the table and replacing his chair soberly left the room.

It was summertime then and still light outside and I thought I would go and play with the other kids. But then I stopped and thought again and instead I took my story book and went out to the porch where my father was sitting in a rocking chair reading a newspaper. I knew what I wanted more than anything else; I wanted Papa to read me a story, only I didn't really want it for myself, I wanted it for him. But it was very hard for me to explain this, I couldn't even explain it to myself, so I just sort of stood around pretending to look at the pictures in the book and hoping my father would understand.

I hadn't to wait long before I felt the cool grey eyes under the heavy brows resting upon me gravely over the rim of his paper, but I could tell he wasn't really thinking of me at all.

"Well, Ben," he said vaguely, still lost in his own thoughts, "is it a good story?"

"I don't know," I said. "I haven't read it yet."

"Ummm."

"I thought maybe," I persisted, "you might want to read it to me."

"O ho!" he exclaimed, his eyes suddenly close and warm with smile. "So that's how it is!" And letting his newspaper slip to the floor he said: "Alright, let's have a look at it. Which story shall it be?"

"Read this one," I said pointing to the picture as I handed him the book. It was a picture of a boy riding high among the tumultuous clouds on a great white winged horse.

"Bel-ler-o-phon," my father said slowly, trying the unfamiliar word syllable on his tongue. "Bellerophon."

And as I stood leaning against the arm of his chair looking out upon the homely familiar cobbled street that had always been there as long as I could remember, and upon the row of familiar two-story houses, each one the smug and ugly copy of its fellows, my father read me the story of the noble youth whose joy was in the flight of eagles and of poesy, and how a cruel doom forced him to bend the wild, free, arrogant Pegasus to his will that he might slay the Chimera who darkened and made heavy the hearts of men.

"Then Pegasus, screaming because of the monster's blood had come upon him, reddening his white sides, fled away. Bellerophon, as he saw the winged horse go, knew that he could never recapture him, and knew that he could never again soar above the fields and the houses and the towns of men. . . . And then, because he saw an eagle soaring in the blue of the air, he wept. Before him, as he knew, there were long and weary wanderings over the face of the earth. He wept, knowing what was gone from him and what was before him."

As he read these lines my father's voice sank almost to a whisper, then faltered and grew still. And it seemed to me that gradually, ineffably, all the fading summer's day was filled with sweet, enormous sadness transfiguring the street, the ugly homes and everything that had happened in our house that unhappy afternoon, and the words came with difficulty as I asked: "Is that the end?"

"No," my father said, shaking his head slowly many times, without lifting his eyes from the printed page, "that's not the end. It wouldn't be right if that was the end. The poet tells us that then Bellerophon rejoiced, for he knew that the pure spaces over him would never again be filled with the blackness and horror of the Chimera."

It was some moments before he spoke again. Down the street that was darkening now a horse came clop-clopping upon the cobbles, its head hanging wearedly under the heavy collar.

The lamplight on the corner hissed and sputtered, flickered and grew suddenly luminous, and across the way, beyond the black roofs of the houses, I could see the evening star glowing in the pale-green translucent sky.

"It's a great story, boy," my father said at last softly, closing the book and running his fingers expertly along the binding. "It certainly is a great story."

And taking out his pipe and tin of tobacco he looked up at me searchingly and at the same time, I thought, shyly.

"Maybe some day," he said, "you will want to be a writer, too. Yes? And maybe you will tell of all those men like your father, millions of men, everywhere, whose lives were darkened by the Chimera."

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# The Face of a City

JOHN BOLING

FROM Russia comes a small book of photographs of Paris* which ought to stir up excitement among our commercial and arty-minded camera men. Ilya Ehrenbourg, its author and one of the great continental reporters of our time, for years has been living in Paris; here he wrote many of his novels and magnificent reports, here he witnessed the feverish pulse and changing scene of a city which produced a Zola and Jean Jaurès, a Murger and an American Left Bank. Ehrenbourg may have seen Átget's classic photographs depicting the provincial aspects of the metropolis, the tender poetic prints which glorified the petit-bourgeois colorit of the outskirts for the painters of twenty years ago; perhaps he has seen the modernistic spiralbound book with the preface by Paul Morand presenting Brassai's spectacular show of 60 photographs, "Paris de Nuit," dramatically exposing the mysterious quality and pictorial originality hidden beneath the growing shadows of metropolitan nights; and he surely must have seen the hundreds of pictures which the Hungarian photographer Kertesz made of Paris: sensitive types and characteristic details, the shifting traffic and picturesque streets and corners, photographed expressly for publication in breezy newspapers and lengthy feature magazines.

But all these books and photo magazines presented only part of the vast panorama, all these camera men did not include the penetration and analysis which Ehrenbourg regarded vitally important today. They applied the modern photo technique for an antiquated outlook on life; they used every known trick of camera and lighting for surface pictures without aim nor discretion. Nowhere could one find an expression of the social background which is called propaganda nor that of the sociological implications bound to reveal more than rotogravure pages allow to reveal. Nowhere was evident the convincing momentum and absolute strength of the camera which can unify a group of individual shots to an extraordinary manifestation of the contemporary scene.

Equipped with a Leica camera and angle viewfinder, Ilya Ehrenbourg set out to rediscover a city that has been far too much romanticized and surrounded with a halo of pseudo-artistry. This book gives us a cross-section of the little joys and large miseries of the proletarized middle-class and labor population; and its lasting fascination is undoubtedly due to the fact that Ehrenbourg has been able to catch the most intimate gestures and expressions of these people fully unaware of the camera. Nothing is posed nor strikingly "pictorial," nowhere an aesthetic or artistic strain of photo montage or angular distortion, —nothing much happens in these pictures although each one tells a complete story in itself. This and the shockingly true and human insight make the perusal such an exciting experience. This unpretentious book has the rare quality of a movie in slow motion tempo recorded in natural sequence. Here groups of workmen gather for a glass of beer, the old women sit before the crumbling façades of their houses and stare indifferently into an empty future, the children play in the gutter, the crippled and drunkards sit and lie on benches and pavement and dope off their fate allotted them by our present society. And all around swirls the life of the street: sidewalk restaurants and carousels, open dance plateaus and performing athletes, pushcarts, show windows, flower vendors and gypsy fortune tellers. Ehrenbourg does not contrast the wretched machine slave against the deluxe glamor of Gay Paree. He does not crash the gates of the factories to glorify the machine, which is the same in Russia as in France, he only shows the life-withered faces and figures in their off hours, the burdened carriage of body and mind, the broken spirit of infinite despair.

It is astonishing indeed how little cognizance has been given the camera as a powerful historic recorder of the times. Marked and expanded in literature as the *Age of Transition,* what a wealth of material for myth-exploding "stills" offers photography in giving reality to what the inner eye may see. Except for the sudden boom our publishers respirated into compilations of ready material into sentimental and lop-sided surveys of "only yesterdays," little encouragement has come forth to present in graphic terms what hundreds of print-pages cannot describe. And even among compilations, the publishers missed the most interesting of all: a panorama of "Twenty Years of World History," published three years ago in several European countries.

The tragic case of our camera men is tied up with their complete surrender of heart and soul to advertising. A wealth of knowledge and experience, ability and talent is being used up for posed fear pictures propagating a particular brand of toilet paper or into most intricate lighting technique to make a can of beans look like a bowl of crystals. The art of photography has been limited by advertising to the creative urge of distorting a car into a super-long body, stamina-inflated tires and the durability of an armored tank; the photographer's conception of beauty has been pressed into the catalogues of model exchanges standardized by moneyed clients as typical of the average taste of the average buying public.

The others went aesthetic and acquired a "romantic" way of surveying the scene or, at best, they somersaulted into technical bravados of surréalist abstractions. Dr. Erich Salomon probably took the finest pictures the Leica camera has as yet produced, but his ambition was to become the "candid" recorder of the snore and sneeze of diplomats and society ladies and he snapped them chewing spaghetti or dissipating in boredom. Remie Lohse was propelled by sophisticated magazines and photo connoisseurs into public life as "The Big Miniature Man," but he only advanced to an uninspired vulgarization of perfectly lighted strip acts and hot-cha parades of Harlem night clubs and Broadway burlesques.

And Walker Evans, most brilliant and sincere among the younger photographers, when he was commissioned by the New York T.E.R.A. to make a photo report of relief work was confined to the uninteresting task of reproducing images of social workers in their various activities, of workmen engaged in obviously trumped-up jobs, of recording the machinery of relief, just as a commercial photographer in an advertising agency is required to record the machinery of salesmanship. We have not seen these pictures, but we saw a few stirring and true records of misery and depression which were done collaterally. Some publisher, if not the T.E.R.A. itself, should have commissioned Evans—and it is not too late — to accomplish this important job for which he has shown passion and ability.

So it must be stated that most of the document pictures do not come from our photographers; they are an accidental by-product of the newsman. Conscious of the lack of material and the tremendous range of photographic expression, the Film and Photo League has gathered a number of militant photographers and newsreel men to collective action. They were sent out to cover lynch trials and strike bombardments, hunger marches and N.R.A. parades; and photo exhibits of the social scene have been arranged with many outsiders participating.

Strangely enough, we can find a full-grown collection of document pictures not by the photographers, but by painters like Reginald Marsh, Denys Wortman, Ben Shahn and others. Marsh uses much of the photo material for his luscious figures and blank faces of Fourteenth Street crowds and Burlesque audiences; Denys Wortman found infinite source material for his daily Metropolitan Movies cartoon, without using it with sympathy to the working class; and Ben Shahn, who will be remembered for his series of gouaches depicting the Sacco and Vanzetti case, is working at present on a mural for one of New York's prisons. Whatever this may point out, it seems certain that our painters,

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* *My Paris,* by Ilya Ehrenbourg, Moscow, 1933. $1.50.

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inspired and influenced by mural painting which is collective work and meant for mass inspection, are many steps ahead of our photographers in recognition of the camera as a powerful medium of expression.

Ehrenbourg's record of the social strata of a city is significant today, for it clearly shows that the camera eye stands before the lens, that a social consciousness is needed to produce a picture revealing the rotating kernel of our cultural labyrinth.

Indeed, a great deal of credit must be given to the Russian Ilya Ehrenbourg who has caught the breath of a typical French city as few photographers ever have. In not one of these photos does he succumb to the classic Russian technique of symbolizing events with the enlarged features of face and body shot from below, nowhere can one trace back the German influence of technical sharpness and geometric-exact composition which allows but little range for emotional modulation. Despite the poor reproduction, one can easily see the splendid composition Ehrenbourg found for this monochromatic group of photos and a pictorial depth of character reminiscent of the Scotch master Hill. It is to be hoped that this book will soon find an American publisher and that our photographers will be inspired if not commissioned to start work on a series of books recording the background of American life today whose repercussions will be heard tomorrow.

# Correspondence

## Who Should Be Arrested?

To The New Masses:

Pavlov, the famous Russian scientist, is said to have performed a certain experiment on dogs during his study of reflexes. He showed the dog a square drawn on a sheet of paper. Then he fed it. He kept this up for a long time until the dog associated the square with food and wagged its tail whenever shown one. Then he gradually began to change the shape of the square in the direction of being a circle. When the circle was finally achieved, the dog fell into complete confusion and had a nervous breakdown.

The same experiment is now being worked on California cops with the same result. They no longer know what constitutes a crime, who is a criminal nor who to arrest. One cop, in nervous desperation, was obliged to turn to his prospective victim for advice.

A certain comrade, who name is withheld for obvious reasons, was standing on a corner waiting for a street car. The police had a warrant out for her arrest on framed up charges. A cop spotted her and was thrown into a complete indecision. He screwed up his fat face, removed his hat, scratched his head, but still no intelligence was forthcoming. Finally he walked up to her.

"Say!" he asked. "Don't they want you at the police station?"

"Why, no," she answered. "I'm out on bail."

"How much?" he asked.

"Five hundred dollars," she said.

"Okay," said the cop. "My mistake." And he walked away satisfied.

This confusion extends through the whole police force. Previous standards of criminality have disappeared and the new ones are not yet understandable. Crimes for which men were previously arrested are now committed by gangsters and vigilantes under the direction of Chambers of Commerce and Industrial Associations and instead of arresting them, police are required to assist them and even arrest the persons attacked.

Perhaps the most confusing thing of all is the fact that the reason why you arrest a man no longer has anything to do with the charges on which he is jailed. Police are obliged, when instructed to arrest certain prisoners, to take them to the police station and try to dope out there what charges to book them on.

During the recent raids on workers homes and headquarters, one man Dave Lyons, who was a recent graduate of the University of, California Bachelor of Arts degree, former editor of the college paper and now employed by the S.E.R.A., was jailed on charges of vagrancy. Of course he wasn't a vagrant any more than the cop who arrested him. He was really arrested for having written articles for the workers' press.

A recently published short story by Tillie Lerner won such high acclaim that New York publishers began stumbling all over each other looking for the author in order to sign her up for a novel she is working on. They finally located her in the San Francisco City Jail charged with vagrancy. At her trial the judge refused to allow checks from publishers to be introduced as evidence of visible means of support.

The grand prize for garbled justice belongs to Judge Sylvan Lazarus, who won himself the reputation of being a lovable, philanthropic old gentleman on the strength of it. Some four hundred-odd workers were arrested by the police as one of the means of breaking the General Strike. Not one of these men deserved to be arrested, however, they were all charged with vagrancy. It so happened, since the police charged up and down the waterfront arresting men hit and miss on hunches or the fact that they looked like foreigners, that a great many of these prisoners actually were vagrants. At least they were destitute, unemployed men, all of which comes under the head of vagrancy. When a whole mass of these prisoners appeared before Judge Lazarus, his sense of injustice was outraged. Here were actual vagrants charged with vagrancy. He released all the vagrants, apologized to each and every one, gave them each fifty cents so that they could sleep that night and sent them on their way. However, he was careful to segregate all those who were not in any way vagrants and send them back to jail.

Is it any wonder that the members of the San Francisco police force have their caps off and are scratching their beefy heads in perplexity? It isn't that they care who they arrest or who they slug or why. But they would like to get the thing straight.

At one time they could arrest anyone who was seen distributing Communist leaflets and feel sure that if they brought them up to the station some sort of charge would be slapped on them, even though there was no law against it. But now even the bosses are distributing Communist leaflets. Fake Communist leaflets, to be sure, but how is a cop to tell the difference? In San Diego ,the League Against Communism faked a mimeograph leaflet calling on the workers to "rape, loot and burn" in the name of the Communist Party. This was to give them an excuse for a rampage of wild, hoodlum vandalism against workers' homes and halls.

In Los Angeles, a leaflet was issued under the name of the non-existent "Young People's Commuist League," supporting Upton Sinclair for Governor. Workers' traced the license numbed of the car used in distribution to the election headquarters of Green for Governor. This was a move to prejudice the public against Creel's rival, Sinclair. The unfortunate part of it is that many people may actually vote for Sinclair under the belief that he is a Communist on the basis of the leaflets.

These are only a few examples. The true nature of capitalist justice is exposed before the workers of California. The string has come undone and the shameful package is all over the street. The bosses no longer take the trouble to make pretences.

Michael Quin.

San Francisco.

## Desperation in Texas

To The New Masses:

One-third of the cotton is being picked in Texas!

Where is that $39,000 worth of cod liver oil bought by the State Relief Administration? Some of it was once discovered—in a can, given to a relief client, which was supposed to contain molasses. The effect of any cod liver oil is not seen in the anaemic men, women and children picking this one-third of the nation's crop. One cannot deny that cod liver oil, meat, bread, milk and vegetables are needed more than ever by the starving unemployed who are assigned these forced labor jobs by the relief bureaus. In addition to lowered vitality, they are picking the worst crop in about forty-one years. The bolls are small and difficult to handle. Those lucky enough to pick as much as 100 pounds a day get only 60 cents at the most.

Desperation has gripped the working class of Texas. Time and again the unemployed have had relief cut off from them, relief officials declaring that no more money was available. Yet $83,000,000 is supposed to have been spent on relief since this time last year. Now, as the cotton pickers crawl weakly back and forth between the cotton rows—they must crawl because the stalks are not very high this year—they wonder why they receive so little. They cannot earn enough for food, much less buy back in material the cotton which they are helping to harvest. But they had to buy their own sacks this year. It was difficult for the county relief boards to force their wage slaves into the fields this year. Regular pickers were instructed to go to the fields only if they had been promised jobs in advance. In this manner, the federal and state governments exercised a monopoly on this work, cooperating with the landlords who will, because of the meagre wages which they pay, put better profits into their own pockets. They are also gleefully pocketing the benefits of the destruction program.

All day long the pickers move slowly up and down, sweating and hungry, while the landlords drive into town in their limousines, which the workers have helped to buy. This is one of those cherished Southern traditions. With the coming of daylight, the pickers enter the field, getting soaked to the skin with dew. A few moments' rest at noon, a nibble of cold and scanty lunch, then back at work until after dusk sets in. This is the only quitting signal. Then, taking from their pallets under the wagons the infants and children too small to drag a cotton sack, these cotton slaves go to their miserable huts for another bit of food and a few hours of rest before another long day of glaring heat and partially-appeased hunger. There is no excuse for remaining out of the field. A pregnant woman may pick for hours, feel the pangs of labor strike her, then drag herself to the nearest shade to give birth to her child.

This is the way that this one-third of the nation's cotton is picked!

Austin, Tex. Louise Preece.

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# Books

## The Antics of Pirandello

*THE NAKED TRUTH, by Luigi Pirandello. E. P. Dutton & Co. $3.*

THE editors of the London Times Literary Supplement recently surprised its constant readers by abandoning British literature for a week to devote an entire issue to a discussion of Italian literature under Mussolini. Judging from the numerous advertisements inserted in it by Italian publishers, the original intentions of the editors were strictly honorable. This issue was, no doubt, intended as a polite manifestation of their esteem and regard for fascist Italy. But somehow the gesture did not come off properly. Bronx cheers were strewn all over the dignified format of the Times—rather unconscious and not fully developed Bronx cheers, it is true, but their presence was unmistakable, for there were enough of them to awaken the soundest sleeper to the realization that Italian literature has reached a new low in sterility since 1918. The polite English critics grappled with the Italian novel, the Italian drama, and Italian poetry, with the best intentions of revealing their grappling skill without doing any harm. But each time the subject was easily pinned to the ground without much effort. "What else could I do?" moaned the tone of each critic.

There wasn't much else they could do, for in the last analysis Italian literature has been sick and dying since Fascism; even a polite Englishman can beat it to a pulp with a few casual facts. They showed that Italy's great writers are men who were great before Fascism; under Fascism they acquiesce and exist, but they do not produce anything of consequence. Benedetto Croce has turned to history because it is always much safer to write about the past. D'Annunzio's career is finished; Italian fascists claim credit for it and go on producing plays written by him long before 1918. The Times points out that Italians will read voraciously the fiction of other European countries, rarely the fiction produced by Italian writers. "What is it that they do not find in Italian fiction? That is a difficult and delicate question," says the Times. "It is difficult and delicate," only because the gentlemanly litterateur, with his love for playing cricket, does not wish to offend with the truth. The answer to the question is that realism has gone out of fashion in Italy under Mussolini. Fascism does not find it profitable to let writers depict life as they see it about them. The writer is urged to write history. If he must write fiction, then he is compelled to make his fiction as fictitious as possible.

Novels are so scarce in Italy that here is what one Italian critic wrote in an English review: "To *narrate* has become the watchword, and no sooner has a novel appeared than it is praised principally because it is a novel, just as family relations praise a mother for giving birth to a male child. And after that the work is examined with the greatest possible indulgence. This is what happened to *Gli Indifferenti* (The Indifferent) by the very young writer Alberto Moravia. There was such amazement that an Italian had succeeded in writing a real novel that more than one, even of the severest critics, almost proclaimed it a miracle." Yet, as the Times critic points out, Moravia's novel, although a competent and realistic study of moral disintegration in a bourgeois family, would hardly have created a stir in any other country. As a matter of fact, when the book was translated into English and published in America two years ago, few periodicals thought it of sufficient importance to review. Those of us who reviewed it found it no miracle, not even a revelation. In Italy it was a "miracle" because here, at last, was a realistic novel that did not damn Fascism, the lesson drawn from it being that Moravia's characters would not have disintegrated had they been good fascists. But realism, on the whole, is considered unhealthy. In the field of drama there is actually an anti-realistic drive going on. "There is nothing absolute," Italian playwrights chant in chorus, and then proceed to show that all is relative. To drive this thought home one Italian writer recently wrote a play in which his hero arrives in a certain country where the inhabitants express their grief by whistling, their pleasure by beating the tambourine, and instead of lying down when they sleep, they hang themselves from the ceiling.

Acrobatics like these have been largely inspired by Luigi Pirandello, whom Italy calls its most eminent living writer. Since, as Pirandello himself will tell you, all is relative, this is probably true. Almost seventy years old, Pirandello has more imitators than any other writer in Italy. His involved concepts, which revolve around the truth without ever touching it, are peculiarly adapted to the kind of temperament Fascism would mould in Italian writers. He is sceptical, ironical, cynical, and always harmless. Fate for him has a special significance. It is not only the stuff from which his formula for writing plays, novels, and short stories is made, but it is an explanation, *per se,* of anything in life that is difficult to understand or annoying to bear. As a youth, Pirandello left his comfortable home in Porto Empedecole, where his father was a rich man, and went to Germany to study metaphysics. He has never been able to escape the influence of those studies. They have lifted him to heights that have been regarded as profound because they have not always been understandable. From those heights he has looked down on reality, contending all the while that what he sees does not exist; what exists is that which cannot be explained. Ergo, Fate. Fate is Life and Life is Queer. Each one of his short stories and plays seems to have been written for no other reason than to show how Queer life is. *The Naked Truth,* Pirandello's latest short story collection to appear in this country, is a repetition of the other short stories we have had from him and, in a large measure, a repetition of the ideas that underlie his plays. The general impression he seeks to leave with his reader is that life is so very tricky that none of us should be surprised or rebellious when it plays us dirt. The state of society does not concern him. He views sordidness among the Italian peasants with the calloused indifference of an undertaker who is not in the least concerned about the causes that killed the body he is working on, so long as he achieves certain theatrical effects.

One of the short stories, *The Red Booklet,* treats with the horrible practice of the Italian government of turning over foundlings to peasants who nurse the infants and bring them up for some pitiful sum paid to them monthly while the babies remain alive. The peasants are so poor that they will often give up the red booklets, with which they collect their allowances, to tradesmen in exchange for clothing. All this Pirandello carefully brings out, not to condemn the Italian government for the stupidity of this system, but to impress the reader with the irony of the situation he creates. A foundling dies of malnutrition on the day its foster-mother's daughter is to be married. Mother and daughter are in tears, for the red booklet is no longer worth anything, and the tradesman has taken back the wedding trousseau he advanced them on the strength of it. The mother goes to the authorities begging them to help her. And while the dead foundling is being carried out of the house to the cemetery, we see her coming down the road "radiant and triumphant," holding up, for her daughter to see, another foundling and a red booklet. The plight of the peasant is only incidental to Pirandello's story; he is much more concerned with the clever twist.

*The Annuity* is a short story of the same calibre. Pirandello tells of another evil practice that has the government's stamp of approval. When an old man is no longer strong enough to farm his lands, a rich man will make a bargain with him, whereby he will pay the old man a few cents a day for the rest of his life in return for the deed of the property. Pirandello turns this pernicious state of affairs into a pleasant fable. His old man outlives the rich man, and at the age of 105 goes back to his lands in full possession again. Pirandello's obsession with the idea of Fate is apparent in nearly every one of the short stories in this volume. In such a short story as *Va Bene (All Goes Well),* which tells about a man who was consistently pursued by

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Bad Luck, Fate is so uppermost that, like a thing hackneyed, it ceases to have any meaning. "How cruel life is," Pirandello readers are likely to say to themselves. "What, indeed, is the use of striving for anything?"

I do not know the extent of Pirandello's reading public, but I imagine it is large, for he has a gift of narrative that gives grace to his most absurd themes. He can reproduce the conversation of all kinds of people with a remarkable sense of accuracy, and, at times, probes penetratingly into the motives of his characters. For all these talents, his work is made thin and tedious by his warped outlook on life.

There was a time when Pirandello's antics with metaphysics resulted in patterns that startled with their originality. But no writer can go on depending on clever twists; eventually, he becomes twisted himself. His latest novel to be translated into English, *One, None, And a Hundred Thousand,* was actually a satire of himself, the satire of a man who worried himself sick over the idea of what was reality. It is little wonder that Fascism approves of Pirandello. He is a good acrobat; he can do all sorts of tricks without touching earth for a long time. So long as other writers follow his example and hang themselves from ceilings, Fascism will feel safe.

JERRE MANGIONE.

## A Pal for Tatiana

*I AM A COSSACK, by Boris Kamyshansky. Longmans, Green and Co. $2.50*

The renewed campaign of slander against the Soviet Union, which is finding more and more room in the press and the movies, is being consistently carried on in such books as this. That is why its cheap abuse, its sentimentality, its incredible, melodramatic, "saved-by-a-fluke" incidents did not prevent its publication, as they should have done. And that is why this "biography" will be discussed in reviews as another valuable inside story of the Revolution.

But, of course, this is not a biography, though the blurb lists it as such. It is another *Escape From the Soviets.* The author is the son of a Cossack landowner, educated as an engineer as well as a Cossack in the Czar's army, who at at outbreak of the First World War is on a secret mission abroad for the Russian government. Returning to his native country at the moment when the Kerensky regime is being exposed by the Bolsheviks, he fights in the White Armies and then escapes to America when their defeat is complete.

The author establishes himself as a man of liberal instincts early in the book. The Revolution of 1905 found him sympathetic to the miserable state of the peasantry and complaining that just such oppressive measures as the Czar was taking were alienating the middle and upper classes. He was tolerant, though a bit contemptuous, of two fellow students who had become revolutionaries. He helped save the life of a fugitive revolutionary. And also, like a true Cossack, he showed his nobility by protecting the lives of a Jew and his little daughters during a pogrom. These incidents not only prove useful to the author by establishing his humanity and broad-mindedness; they also come in handy later in the book to save him from the Cheka and to help him escape.

If the first half of this mediocre account of a young Cossack's life makes the reader wonder why it was published, the second half effectively shows him. The first sign that this dull sentimental story is not the purpose of the book comes suddenly upon the reader, who has been plowing through an account of the author's student days at the institute. The building of Dnieprostroy according to him was a complete waste of labor and money. Why? Well, his own studies of it as an engineering student had convinced him of it. And, to dispel any doubts as to his own ability to judge, he adds that the project was never undertaken in Old Russia because of similar findings by Czarist engineers.

Then the pace becomes swift. As soon as the Kerensky government is overthrown, all pretense of detachment is dropped. We read about the "misguided hordes of Reds" who swooped down "for the conquest of our rich Cossack land." Tales of murder, rape, torture, all darkly implied, alternate with sneers at the disorganized Red hordes. No sooner do the Red armies drive out the Whites than down settles the "Red Terror" on these peaceful inhabitants. A fleeing tribe of nomads numbering 100,000 is massacred to a man. Utterly careless of what history has already said of the Bolsheviks, our author fiercely flashes this ace: "Had it not been for the existence of the White Army, the Soviet Government would have joined hands with the Germans, would have sent her troops against the Allies."

Consistency is also cast to the winds. On one page we learn that the "spectacular trials" of sabotaging engineers were caused by the fanatical Reds, whose ignorance of engineering made them suspect the more cautious councils of experts. A few pages later, his account of his own position as engineer under men whom he hates proves amply that the fanatical Reds were perfectly correct in their behavior toward the White Guards whom they were forced to make use of during the desolation of the civil wars.

But the end comes at last. "The prospect of spending our lives in Soviet Russia, which meant conditions unbearable to civilized (sic!) people, filled us with despair." And so he escapes with his family, his cheap heroics, his abuse and distortions to write, many years later, a book that will put him once more at the service of those reactionary forces doomed to be wiped off the earth as the October Revolution cleaned him and his kind out of Russia.

PHIL HOROWITZ.

## A Culture That Survived

*THE LUMMI INDIANS OF NORTHWEST WASHINGTON, by Bernhard Stern. Columbia University Press. $2.*

Most white Americans have a conception of the Indian that results from the exploitation of the Indian by the circus, the vaudeville circuit, the movies, and the melodramatic novelist. Nor does the casual tourist who has seen "Fred Harvey" Indians in the Grand Canyon, or in their pueblos in New Mexico, their hogans in Arizona, their tepees in Yellowstone Park, know anything about the Indian and his culture.

There are a half million Indians still living in these United States, and they vary greatly from tribe to tribe. Until recent years the anthropologists and ethnologists have neglected serious and scientific study of their

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culture. Thus valuable sociologic data has been lost irretrievably, since the impact of white capitalist civilization has destroyed or changed the life of most tribes. But there are a few groups who have resisted with some success the conscious attempt to break down their tribal life. Among such are the Pueblo Indians of the Southwest and the Northwest Coast Indians, of whom the Lummis are a minor tribe.

"Because of the tribe's geographic isolation until recent years, Lummi culture has remained relatively alive in spite of the aggressive disruptive encroachments of the whites, whose exploitation of the Indians has been flagrant in this region," Bernhard Stern writes. He might have said, "in this as in every region where American imperialism has penetrated." Like the Pueblo Indians, the Northwest Coast Indians could maintain their tribal life longer than other tribes because of the relative inaccessibility of their land, and its poverty of natural resources such as gold and oil, and its inferiority to other areas for agriculture. They were not in the path of the American empire as it conquered its way westward.

The Pueblo Indians are agricultural; the Lummis are hunters and fishers. Like other Northwest Coast tribes, and in contrast to the more democratic Pueblos and Plains Indians, they place great emphasis upon wealth as a determinant of social status. Prestige is gained by the accumulation and the giving away of property. They have an aristocracy of families who inherit wealth, the most valuable being fishing rights in favored locations. In another important respect the Northwest Coast Indians differ from all other Indians; their custom of keeping slaves. The Plains Indians adopted captives into the tribe or killed them; the Lummis enslaved them for life. They also made slaves of orphaned children. To these slaves the drudgery was allotted. Wars in which captives were taken were frequent, as well as feuds between villages and families.

Like other Indian tribes, they are ridden with superstition and their medicine men enjoy great authority. Their social life centers around religious ritual and potlaches, festive occasions when the rich gain greater prestige and power and demonstrate their superiority by gift-giving. The recipient is humiliated if he cannot return an equally valuable gift. The Lummis do not possess the skill of Pueblo Indians in art, except in weaving blankets and baskets. The ceremonial ritualistic dance is however as elaborately developed an art as among any tribe.

The national minorities problem in the United States is larger than the Negro problem, around which it centers as involving most numerous groups. There are not as many racial groups in this country as in the Soviet Union, the only country in which the problem has been solved, on the only possible basis, self-determination and the encouragement of racial or national culture, within a socialist economy. But the American Indians are one such national minority who have suffered racial persecution under the iron fist of white exploitation ever since the arrival of the Spanish Conquistadores. They successfully resisted the attempt to reduce them to chattel slavery, but they have known every other injustice in the arsenal of imperialism. Their white conquerors, who are so horrified at the un-Christian proposal to expropriate the expropriators, had no scruples against dispossessing the Indians from tribal lands. The Tsar of all the Russias was more "honorable" in dealing with racial minorities than the "great white father" in Washington. Every moral precept upon which bourgeois civilization is supposed to be based, according to its apologists, was and is being violated in dealing with the American Indian. Robbed of their communal property, butchered ruthlessly, slandered as sneaking thieving savages, their primitive culture, in certain cases a primitive Communism, destroyed, herded upon reservations and pauperized, in the first concentration camps beside which Hitler's are nurseries, the American ruling-class can now afford to be more "liberal" and "generous" with their "wards." But a real solution will be found only on the basis of self-determination as proposed by the Communist Party as a solution for the Negro problem. Soviet Russia has shown the only way to end racial as well as class conflict and exploitation by the dominant class of the dominant race.

Stern's book is a valuable contribution to the growing literature on the American Indian, but one wishes he had given, in addition to his interesting data on the social and cultural life of the Lummis, more about their political and economic organization, the record of their relations with the whites, and more than the mere assertion that they have been mercilessly exploited.

LISTON M. OAK.

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# The Theatre

THE NEW SEASON is upon us. A few hits have already turned up their noses and a few flops their toes. The Sunday dramatic columns are jammed with hopes and announcements. New Theatre opened its season with another successful "night" at the Civic Repertory Theatre, and The League of Worker's Theatres is planning an Eastern festival. The Theatre Union is freshening *Stevedore* for an October first re-opening, and Elmer Rice is putting the finishing touches to his *Judgment Day.*

The feverish and chaotic Broadway theatre is planning its assaults on taste, the pocketbook, and in this play or that one, on the working-class. Infrequently it will rise out of its muck and deliver an exciting three hours. The left-wing theatres are preparing their jobs too, only with a different kind of fervor, with more plan and with assuredly more purpose.

THE NEW MASSES will undertake not only to keep abreast of both theatres, but also to be a little ahead. We're going to try to make it hard for you to waste any dollars or hours, on plays that aren't worth while.

*Item One*: Summer theatres are never what they should be and more than you expect. I didn't see more than a half a dozen these last few months (no man in his senses would see more) and only two were worth remembering. The R. P. A. at Putney, Vermont produced *Men Grow Taller* by Elizabeth England. As soon as Miss England or her producer learns that labor organizers and Communists don't gloat over misery and starvation, the play may be remade into something really good. An early scene in which the hero, a skilled worker, has to decide against scabbing though his decision means his wife deserts him is real stuff which up to the present hasn't been touched in the theatre.

Martin Flavin, whose *Criminal Code* titillated reformists a few years ago, has a play, *Amaco,* which was produced on Long Island. Dealing with the rise of finance-capital, nine-tenths of the play is moving and convincing. Bad, dishonest, naive, and absurd last tenth shows the workers rising in wrath . . . against the machines! A reactionary platitude spoiled a good play. Note to workers' theatres: Mr. Flavin may be persuaded to do things with his play.

*Item Two*: The D'Oyly Carte Company in Gilbert and Sullivan repertory (Martin Beck Theatre).

Memorandum for a counter attack to Robert Forsythe's campaign against the English: The Savoyards now disporting themselves on West 45th Street are well worth the attention of the American working-class. Oh, not because of *The Gondoliers* (perfect, superb precision, restraint, etc., etc. — see daily papers); or because *Cox and Box,* the curtain raiser for the second bill (a knockabout farce with an intellectual content corresponding to 3.2 beer, raised to the level of fine entertainment by a recklessly lavish outpouring of beautiful clowning): but because of *The Pirates of Penzance.* The *Pirates* have something important to say to an American audience, gathered together in the middle of this fourth decade of the twentieth century, and this second black year of the New Deal. Surely no one will disagree that the pièce de résistance, the central motif and Mount Everest of this opera, is reached in the second act, when the cops are trying musically to pull themselves together to sally forth against the pirates. It is here that the message is delivered, and it is one that the embattled workers of Rooseveltian America may receive with glad recognition: A cop's heart is yellow. Faced with the prospect of a fair fight, a skull to skull, toe to toe, upstanding, eye-seeking slugging match, the cop's knees turn to water, his bowels likewise, and his "obvious course is now to hide." It is only when gathered in overwhelming force, with tear-gas bombs, machine-guns, bayonets, etc., that he slaps his chest and sings "tarantara." And—which is why this is a counter campaign to Forsythe's—it was an Englishman who revealed this all-important fact about the cops. W. S. Gilbert, to be exact. He didn't mean it quite that way, of course, because the pirates who throw the fear of God into the cops turn out in the last reel to be all noblemen who have gone wrong. But let that pass. Go and see *The Pirates of Penzance.* The production is aged in the wood, the real McCoy. And the moral's there.

*Item Three*: New Theatre magazine has run three "nights" during the last year each of which was better than its predecessor. Out of them have come three first-rate pieces, *Newsboy, Dimitroff,* and *Free Thaelmann.* For the first and third of these Alfred Saxe and the Workers' Laboratory Theatre deserve great applause . . . and they get it. Any one who hasn't seen *Newsboy* doesn't know what the *new* theatre is like. Put that on your list. And put *Free Thaelmann* on too. Both will be given again. This department will tell you when.

*Free Thaelmann* is a group chant in a new form called "a collective report." It is dramatic journalism at its best. I'm not going to spoil it by detailing it for you. See it. It will be used on street corners, on picket lines, at union meetings. It's something like Time's radio feature but much more forthright and exciting.

On Friday night when this play was given, other enjoyable skits were shown, among them Bunin's puppets which are unusually good. They can be seen again. Jane Dudley danced a superlatively concrete study of a worker's life. New Theatre nights are more than worth the price (25c to 99c). Others are on their way.

*Item Four*: American Playwright! Attention! The children's angle in the war between classes has been overlooked in the theatre. Nice teachers are very diligent when they impress the vicious psychology of profit, imperialism, and the maintenance of the *status quo* on their pupils. There is no working-class theatre for children in this country, as far as I know. It must be established and there must also be material for it. In the Soviet Union, where there are many such theatres, the paucity of material troubles them too. So there's going to be a contest.

First prize for the best play, 2,000 roubles to be deposited in Moscow to the winner's credit or a free trip to the Soviet Union plus three weeks as a guest of the I. U. R. T. (You'll find out later what it stands for.) For the runner up, 1,000 roubles will be deposited or he may chose a trip and ten days in the U. S. S. R. Contest closes January 1, 1935.

Send scripts to the International Union of Revolutionary Theatres, Moscow, Petrovka 10, Suite 69, in care of the Children's Contest. Enclose your name in a *separate envelope* so that all plays can be judged on their merits. The scenes may be laid anywhere in the world and the subject matter from the kindergarten to the picket line to imperialist war.

GEORGE WILSON.

## Other Current Shows

*Dodsworth by Sidney Howard from Sinclair Lewis' novel. Schubert Theatre.*

Tale of a big-shot business man who doesn't know what he wants and finds it. Indicates in a third-rate way the decay of part of the finance-aristocracy, and the rejuvenation, via love, of another part. Walter Huston and Maria Ouspenskaya are *actors* and worth applauding. Cheapest seat $1.10.

*Sailor Beware. It doesn't matter who wrote and produced it. Lyceum Theatre.*

Smut just exciting enough to stimulate audiences for eleven months. Suggestive of a cover for Film Fun. Cheapest seat $1.10.

*She Loves Me Not by Howard Lindsay. 46th St. Theatre.*

Whipped-cream farce from Princeton. Contains a vicious and not terribly funny satire of Communists. Not much funnier than *Sailor Beware.*

*Tobacco Road by Jack Kirkland from Erskine Caldwell's novel. 48th St. Theatre.*

The best play now running. Amazing revelation of the sons and daughters of the American Revolution (the real stuff though). The play by no means tells the whole story of Georgia poor white trash, but what it tells is worth paying as much as a dollar-ten to see. Cheapest seat 50c.

*Saluta with Milton Berle. Imperial Theatre.*

An extended and torpid floorshow with an interesting dance by Felicia Sorel and partner. If you can get in for nothing leave immediately after that dance. If seats were 10c they wouldn't be worth it.

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## Current Films

*Petersburg Night* (Rossfilm-Amkino): In his *White Nights* Dostoyevsky took up the cause of the exploited musical genius in old Russia. Today his exposé of the concert racket constitutes a commentary on the relationship between contemporary bourgeois society and its artists. *Peterburg Night,* adapted from the Dostoyevsky novel, is the first honest film about musicians, their relation to society, and their fruitless struggles (not unlike the proletariat's) for creative freedom under capitalist society. *Petersburg Night* is refreshing in treatment. Unlike other films about musicians it is never sloppy or sentimental (*Humoresque* or *The Way of All Flesh*), nor are the musicians freaks or "mad" geniuses (*The Constant Nymph*) removed from normality. And even more encouraging is the good solid craftsmanship displayed by G. Roshal in his initial directorial job: splendid handling of actors and clever manipulation of music. Roshal has also written a short, *The New Gulliver,* based on *Gulliver's Travels.*

*She Loves Me Not* (Paramount): From the really very funny play and satire on college life, Elliot Nugent has succeeded in making the unfunniest film of the season. Perhaps I should warn you, that Bing Crosby who can't be accused of being a comedian plays the lead as a young college man. And even Miriam Hopkins fails us—for which blame the director.

*Soviets Greet New Turkey*: produced last year (as *Angora: The Heart of Turkey*) by the Leningrad Cinema Trust as a gesture of friendship between the U.S.S.R. and Turkey, this film tells the story of the Turks' efforts to rid themselves of archiac customs and religious practices, and of their struggle for the economic and social advancement which they were unable to achieve under German or British imperialism. Beginning with a slow-paced idyllic interpretation of the "old" regime, *Angora* carries the story of the development of Turkey into the industrialized, modern life of today. The film is varied in treatment. Dialogue, used only where quite necessary, never retards the pace. And the musical score is beautifully blended from native music and from the works of Debussy and Ravel.

*La Cucaracha* (Pioneer-RKO): This short is a Roxy-like creation around the famous Mexican folk song. It is worth mentioning, however, because it represents a technical advance in the three-color process. However, Cornelius Vanderbilt and John Jay Whitney needn't get all excited over their little short, for the Soviet Union has recently perfected it's own color process (independent of Hollywood) that puts *La Cucaracha* to shame. The film is *Nightingale, Little Nightingale,* by N. Ekk of the *Road to Life* fame. I. L.


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# Between Ourselves

TO stimulate the writing of revolutionary plays for immediate production by the workers' theatres, NEW MASSES and New Theatre join in offering the following prizes:

1. $50 for the best revolutionary play, anti-war, anti-Fascist, strike or relief struggle, etc. Any dramatic form; realistic, symbolic, musical, comical, etc. Maximum playing time, approximately 35 minutes.

2. $25 for the best short revolutionary play; any form, any subject. Maximum playing time, approximately 15 minutes.

3. $25 for the best revolutionary political sketch suitable for performance at street meetings, workers' clubs, picnics, etc., as well as on the stage. Maximum playing time, approximately 10 minutes.

The contest begins at once, closes December 15. Winners will be announced in the January 1, 1935 issues of NEW MASSES and New Theatre. The prizes will be given in cash immediately, and the two magazines will sponsor presentation of the three prize plays by workers' theatre groups at the Civic Repertory Theatre in New York, and in other cities.

Rules: New Theatre and NEW MASSES reserve all rights including publication and performance of winning scripts. Royalties to author, wherever possible. No full length plays will be considered. Scripts submitted should be typed on one side and double spaced, and accompanied by return postage. Contestants may submit any number of plays. Judges: Harry Elion, L.O.W.T.; Al Saxe, Workers' Laboratory Theatre; Herbert Kline, New Theatre; Stanley Burnshaw and Joseph North, NEW MASSES.

A new course on the Revolutionary Interpretation of Modern Literature begins at the New York Workers School, 35 East 12th Street, on September 24, arranged under the joint auspices of the school and THE NEW MASSES. The lecturers will include Michael Gold, Joshua Kunitz, Joseph Freeman, Granville Hicks and others. There will be twelve lectures, and the course fee of $3.50 includes a three-months' subscription to THE NEW MASSES. Classes are filling up rapidly. Students are urged to register early. No registration will be taken after classes begin, and the number of students will be limited. Descriptive catalogues are obtainable in Room 301, 35 East 12th Street, New York.

The deadline for the Puppet Play Contest, inaugurated by the Election Campaign Committee of the Communist Party, is October 15. Three prizes are offered for the best puppet plays built around election campaign issues. The first prize is a complete set of Lenin's Works. The puppet shows will be seen on street corners and in halls all through the election campaign. The plays must be short, involve no more than four or five characters (with no more than two appearing on the stage at the same time). Dialogue must be crisp and satirical, and offer good opportunity for pantomime.

The committee suggests that the election issues be brought out through the development of plot rather than through long speeches. This is the principal shortcoming of many of the plays already submitted.

Puppet Plays should be mailed as early as possible to Contest Editor, Room 500, 50 East 13th Street, New York City, N. Y.

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